

# At the edge of the sky



**resource pack**

*'And in the dead of night  
When none of our  
dreams seem realised,  
Take stock.  
About turn,  
And reach for  
the edge of the sky'.*

Sandra Vacciana

**Halfmoon**

# Contents

Preface  
Introduction/Acknowledgments  
How to use The Resource Pack

## Section 1 Personal/Social/Health Education

Aims  
A Question of Gender  
Topics for discussion/debate  
Teacher's Notes

## Section 2 English Literature

Aims  
Creative Writing  
Poetry  
Teacher's Notes

## Section 3 Drama and Theatre Studies

Aims  
Acting Up - Warm Up Games  
Activity 1 - Symbols and Imagery, Concepts and Themes  
Activity 2 - Subtext analysis through Improvisation  
Activity 3 - Text analysis through Hotseating and Forum  
Teacher's Notes

## Section 4 An Interview with the Writer

Section 5 End Notes  
Reading List  
Bibliography

## Preface

The play 'At the edge of the sky' has a central plot and many additional storylines. One of the core themes in the narrative is courage. Having the courage to strike out and follow your instincts; having the courage to possibly 'go it alone'.

It is Katherine's story. She is a young Irish woman who is at times disempowered by the relationship with her father, frustrated by the friendship with her so called boyfriend and tormented by the growing love for her girlfriend, Evanna.

There are strong universal themes which can be drawn from each character. The aim of this resource pack is to provide a stimulus to develop a selection of those ideas, using the medium of drama to facilitate that exploration.

Rather than offering a patch work of concepts and snatches of people's lives, as a starting point we are going to use the characters in the play to discover with our audiences what possibilities await us 'At the edge of the sky'.



Centerprise Publications

## Acknowledgments

This pack was devised, compiled and written by Sandra Vacciana

The Half Moon gratefully acknowledges the contributions of the following:

<b>Norman Goodman</b>	Section 2 : Acrostic poems
<b>Tyrone Benjamin</b>	Section 3 : Warm up games
<b>Lin Coghlan</b>	Section 4 : An Interview with the Writer
<b>Caroline Jackson</b>	Cartoon illustrations of women on page 7
<b>Quay Design Partners</b>	Typographic design

With thanks for use of photographs to Centerprise Publications, Veena Stephenson, Amranda Atkinson and The Museum of London. Cover image is a painting by W. Homer entitled 'Nuit de Éte'.

At the edge  
of the sky



Introduction

## How to use this resource pack

The main focus of the pack is to suggest structures for practical sessions as drama is an interdisciplinary subject. The first two sections are discussion based, relevant to key stage 4 PSHE, English Literature as well as Drama and Theatre Studies.

This pack has been prepared for teachers/educationalists.

The overall themes under exploration in the resource pack are:

**The Family**  
**Gendered Roles**  
**Symbols/Concepts**  
**Friendships**

The teacher's notes at the end of each section are designed to provide guidelines. Within each section there are bullet points which can be used as a basis for discussion with your students.

The Company always welcomes feedback. Please use the evaluation sheet to let us know what you think!

Finally, thank you for booking 'At the edge of the sky', we hope you enjoy the programme.

**Sandra Vacciana**



# A Question of Gender?

The following section can be used as the basis for a PSHE lesson and ideas for discussion.

## Aims:

To look at the concept of gender by focussing on the playwright's representations of women in the story and also by looking at how women's gendered roles are reflected in society as a whole.

To enable students to expand their analytical skills by encouraging them to explore how various social forces may effect an individual in his/her life.

To enable students to develop this analysis by introducing them to the three dimensional characters in 'At the edge of the sky', illuminating the shared experiences between the characters and audience members and also broadening their understanding of issues which will remain outside of their lived experience.

## ACTIVITY ONE

### *Men are lucky, they get women, women just get men'*

(Debbie Lancaster – Crossroads, 1970s Soap Opera)

In the play, the character Eve could be seen to represent all that is weak in a woman. Her friend Katherine accuses her of not being assertive.

**Katherine:** *We can't all run away. Anyway, who are you to talk? You've never done anything for yourself in your entire life. You've always followed some fellas decision in the end.*

Eve is the female character in the play with the tough exterior, who when challenged by men will crumble and succumb to their desires. But how easy is it for women to strike out and confront the men who disempower them? Why would a woman 'choose' to live in the shadow of a man?

- With your class, list some of the characteristics deemed 'natural' in a woman and those deemed 'natural' in a man.
- Helen Cixous, a French Feminist Playwright posits her list of 'Opposed Concepts'



**MEN**  
Activity  
Sun  
Culture  
Day  
Father  
Head  
Intelligible  
Logos

**WOMEN**  
Passivity  
Moon  
Nature  
Night  
Mother  
Heart  
Sensitive  
Pathos



(Cixous 1981b pg 90)

Using Cixous' list as a starting point for discussion, ask your students what qualities they can attribute to the character Eve?

- Are there any connections to be drawn from the list of popular definitions as defined by Cixous and how Katherine describes Eve in extract one?
- Can anyone suggest any external reasons which may have caused her to stay with her boyfriend Barry? Is it because he has a job or because he dominates her in some way?

## ACTIVITY TWO

The term gender is a concept; an idea. Many feminists argue, broadly speaking, that men and women are socialised into the gendered roles of 'masculine' and 'feminine' and that there is very little that is 'natural' about our behaviour. This form of 'construction' however, does not occur in all cultures as Margaret Mead, an anthropologist points out.

Ask your students to read the following.

*'...For instance, the cross cultural studies carried out by anthropologists such as Margaret Mead have shown that there is no universal 'masculine' or 'feminine' personality. The tribes she describes either show characteristics that are undifferentiated by sex or they reverse the sex stereotypes found in modern industrialised society. The Arapesh for example are passive, gentle and non-aggressive people, all of whom take responsibility for looking after the children. In contrast to this 'femininity', both sexes of the Mundagumor tribe demonstrate the characteristics that we understand as 'masculine', while the Tchambull reverse many of our accepted differences. Other examples can be found in anthropology to show further constellations of characteristics and behaviour...'*

Reproduced from **Just Like a Girl** by Sue Sharp.

With your students discuss the possible advantages and disadvantages of gendered roles for men and women.



Photograph by Jeffrey Brown

The Fisk Jubilee Singers. In 1873 they toured Britain to raise funds for Fisk University, a university for black students in Nashville, Tennessee, and introduced spirituals to the country. They are pictured here on a return tour in 1884.



## ACTIVITY THREE

- a) Together, refer back to 'At the edge of the sky'. Discuss how typical a representation you feel Katherine and Evanna are of young women of today?
- As a group, highlight what other information might be useful to take into account, when discussing Katherine and Evanna's status in relation to the men in their lives.

Here are some suggestions:

**Class** Discuss what social class these young people have been born into.

If their class were different would their treatment automatically be different?

**Religion** How much influence does religion bear on the lives of these women?

**Ethnicity** How would you analyse the social position of young Irish women who are white in comparison to young English women who are white? Or to young English women who are black? Or to young English women of Asian descent? You may be interested to know that the Irish Community are now recognised as an ethnic minority in England.

- b) Can your class identify any similarities of experience between these women?

At the edge  
of the sky



section one

## ACTIVITY FOUR

Can your students identify some of the positive/negative changes for women both here in Britain and abroad?

Ask them to think of examples in terms of work (paid and unpaid), education and health-care.



Trackwomen on the Baltimore & Ohio (1943). The wartime manpower shortage opened more jobs of more kinds to women than ever before. Employers hired black women, over-35s, and married women – 3 groups previously barred from most offices and industries.

## TEACHER'S NOTES

Throughout these activities you will take on the dual role of teacher/facilitator.

Although these are discussion based sessions it still requires a strong dynamic in terms of energy and you will have to feed that into the group in the first instance.

Prevent your group from wandering too far from the topic of debate, encourage them to support their theories with examples either from the play or personal experience.

Where possible try to draw the link between how women of very diverse backgrounds can still be disempowered on grounds of gender.

## ACTIVITY FIVE

### Topic for Debate:

Divide your class into two groups. Having discussed some of the issues related to gender and femininity, they should now be able to consolidate their ideas by arguing either 'for' or 'against' the following statement:

*'Mothering is a natural state of being which is why so many women conform to the traditional family role'.*





# Creative Writing

The following section can be used as the basis for an English Literature Class.

## Aims:

To encourage students to constructively criticise a piece of text by 'unpacking' the writing process.

To encourage students to recognise the process for a writer of translating ideas into words and then passing those words over, in the form of a script, to be realised through actions.

To allow students to communicate an individual response to the subject matter and the skills of the cast and the production team.

To convey a sensitive and considered response to the work.



## TEACHER'S NOTES

If your students find areas within the programme that they choose to criticise, encourage them to suggest possible alternatives to what they have seen. They should be able to give reasons as to why they felt something was possibly inappropriate.

Your students should try wherever possible to cite examples to support their observations.

# Half Moon

## ACTIVITY ONE

Ask your students to write a critique of 'At the edge of the sky'.

Ask your class to focus on the particular genre the writer has chosen to use for her story. Can they think of examples from other genres where a writer has chosen to explore similar themes?

Ask your students to:

Note the writer's linguistic style.

How does she use language to create imagery, does she use metaphors/ analogies, is the play anecdotal?

Address your commitment to the characters; did you care about them?

Was your concern sustained until the end of the plot?

How effective was the theatrical design in terms of:

The set, costumes, lighting design?

How did the musical composition feed into the piece?

How effective was the use of the set in terms of artistic direction?

Did the actors utilise the space, the props, the music/sound?

At the edge  
of the sky



section two

## ACTIVITY TWO

Ask your class to turn their writing skills now to poetry.

Below is an example of an Alphabet Poem.

### A to Z: the teenage burden

**A** is for *alms, apathy, apartheid, alcohol, and the army*

**B** is for *brain damage*

**C** is for *contraception, cancer, ciggles, CND, cocaine, Che*

**D** is for *druggles, dictators, death and drought*

**E** is for *Ethiopia, eternity and existentialism*

**F** is for *Filofax, fleas, flirting, food and freedom*

**G** is for *generals, guns, genital diseases and governments*

**H** is for *hash, heroin, hippies, homosexuality and hope*

**I** is for *Ignorance and Innocence*

**J** is for *jive, jazz, joss sticks, junkies, joints and jerking off*

**K** is for *kisses*

**L** is for *litter, love, lesbianism, liberation and life*

**M** is for *masturbation, music, men and MIS*

**N** is for *nuclear bombs and the Navy*

**O** is for *Oppenheimer, opium and optimism*

**P** is for *police, penises, promises, Pakistanis, prostitutes*

**Q** is for *queers and the Queen*

**R** is for *rubbish, riots, race, religion and real estate*

**S** is for *shit, South Africa, sex, symbolism and sadness*

**T** is for *tranvestites, trips, transport and terrorists*

**U** is for *underwear, underprivileged, unwanted and unemployed*

**V** is for *virginity, vagrants, vivisection, vasectomy and violence*

**W** is for *weapons, war, women, winter and wanking*

**X** is the *cross that kept Thatcher in power*

**Y** is for *yuppie and YTS*

**Z** is for *zit of course.*

Ask your students to choose **one** word which they think sums up one of the themes or ideas in the play.

Write the word **down** the left hand-side of the page. The word might be:

**FRIENDS**

**SPIRITUALITY**

**POWER**

Each line has its own letter on the left. Each new line must begin with a word which starts with the letter on that line.

They should try to keep the theme or idea they have chosen running right through the poem.

Try to make some of the lines 'swing on' into the next line rather than stopping abruptly at the end of each sentence.



# Acting Up

The following sections are devised for use in Drama & Theatre Studies.

## Alms:

To allow students to develop drama/theatre skills through active participation so that they may increase their awareness of:

The need to listen

The need to negotiate

The need to be able to assert oneself without allowing a situation to deteriorate.

Exploring these areas through drama will encourage students to:

Develop self confidence through individual and ensemble work.

Sustain concentration over an allocated period of time.

Develop their use of voice

Develop their physical expression

Develop their linguistic skills

Develop their spatial awareness

Develop their creativity

Develop their sensitivity

Recognise their talents.



The Blaskets

At the edge  
of the sky



section three

## Ideas for Warm Up Sessions

The following section is a list of warm up exercises.

They have been designed to include sessions that are theatre games as well as more detailed drama exercises. Encourage your students to participate in the trust exercises as they are good 'confidence builders'. It is necessary for all students to participate in the sound scape as it forms an integral part of activity one.

## Warm Up Games

Time: 5 - 10 Minutes

### LAND & SEA

- 1 Divide the room into two by making an imaginary line.
- 2 Label one section 'land' the other 'sea'.
- 3 As the facilitator you will shout 'land' or 'sea', your students should move to the appropriate side of the divide **rapidly**. There is **no room** for hesitation, if some-one fumbles they are out.
- 4 Allow your students a minute or two to make the differentiation, then swap the labels around so that now when you shout 'land' what you really want your students to do is to go to the 'sea' and when you shout 'sea' you wish them to go to the 'land'.

### FRUIT BOWL

- 1 Ask all but one of the members of your group to get a chair and sit in a circle.
- 2 Label each person alternately 'apple', 'banana', 'orange', 'pear'.
- 3 Ask the volunteer to stand in the middle of the circle.  
He/she will start the exercise.
- 4 The volunteer will shout one name from the fruit bowl e.g. 'pears!'
- 5 On this call all the pears must get up (briskly) and exchange seats with another 'pear'.
- 6 The volunteer must also attempt to find a free chair to sit on!
- 7 As there are not enough chairs to accommodate the amount of people on the floor some-one will remain 'chairless' and that person will be out!
- 8 It is now that person's turn to stand in the middle of the circle and be the 'caller'.
- 9 If the caller wants every-one to swap seats he/she shouts **fruit bowl!**





## FOLLOW MY LEADER

- 1 Divide your group into twos and label them 'A' and 'B'.
- 2 'A' should then cover their partner's eyes using a scarf or a piece of material, etc.
- 3 'A' will now lead their partner around the room, taking care not to allow him/her to bump into any obstacles by giving clear instructions.
- 4 'B' will now be led, with the cover remaining over his/her eyes.
- 5 Allow the exercise to continue for a few minutes until you feel an acceptable level of trust has been established, then ask the pairs to swap and repeat the exercise.
- 6 Now ask everyone to remove the covers from their eyes and place a chair in the space making sure that everyone is aware of where the chair is.
- 7 Repeat the above stages again, but this time ask the person being led at the time to point to where in the room they think the chair is **before** they remove the cover from their eyes.



Illustration:  
Caroline Jackson

## RELAX & FALL

- 1 Ask your group to make quite a tight circle with one person in the middle.
- 2 The volunteer in the middle must close his/her eyes and try to remain relaxed.
- 3 The people on the periphery are now going to pass the person around the circle by gentle pushing them.
- 4 The person in the middle should not have to do anything apart from relax and fall into their arms. It helps if the person does not bend at the waist.
- 5 It is the responsibility of the people in the circle to prevent the volunteer from falling to the ground!



Illustration:  
Caroline Jackson

## SOUND SCAPES

- 1 Ask your group to sit in a circle.
- 2 Nominate one person to think of an event where a lot of people are always present e.g. Notting Hill Carnival, break time at school, a garden fete, Eid celebrations.
- 3 Now each person in the circle must take it in turn to contribute one sound that will help create this environment. They must inform the group of what it is first and then demonstrate how it sounds.
- 4 When you have heard all the sounds, as facilitator you can begin to conduct the event as the leader of an orchestra might.

## HAH!

As the facilitator you are going to choose someone to call the word 'HAH'. This person will be required to 'physicalise' the word with an action.

The action will be as follows. Each student will move from standing with their arms by their sides to creating a form of 'star jump' i.e. the students should not actually leap into the air, but remain grounded.

- 1 Your group should all be standing in a fairly large circle about an arm's width apart.
- 2 Ask your group to focus on their breathing, on how they are standing, on the breathing of the other group members.
- 3 Ask your group to take a deep breath in to the count of ten. Hold. Then breathe out to the count of ten.
- 4 Now ask each person to close their eyes.
- 5 As the facilitator, gently come out of the circle and choose a 'caller'. This person should remain anonymous to the rest of the group.
- 6 When you have chosen your 'caller', they will shout 'HAH'. Your objective is to get the whole group to shout 'HAH' and include the action which they will all physicalise simultaneously. The group should perform as one collective body rather than lots of individuals.

At the edge  
of the sky



section three



## NEGOTIATION & STATUS

- 1 Divide your class up into groups of ten.
- 2 Label each student with a number from 1 - 10
- 3 Ask the group to set up a quick improvisation, e.g. they are in a parents meeting discussing whether or not it is necessary for their children to wear school a uniform.
- 4 Person 1 has the highest status within the group, person 10 the lowest status.
- 5 It should be clear to each team member and those watching who has high status and who has low status.

At the edge  
of the sky



section three

## ACTIVITY ONE

### Symbols and Imagery... Concepts and Themes

#### EXERCISE ONE

Foxy tells Katherine that he has been to 'the edge of the sky'.

Katherine's departure in the curragh with Eve could also be translated, in a metaphorical sense, as travelling to a unknown land...

Many people share the spiritual belief of an after life. This promised land is often referred to as a heavenly place, inhabited by an eternal God.

Discuss with your students what you think the writer wants her audience to imagine Foxy has discovered when he reappears after his death and he tells Katherine that he has been to 'the edge of the sky'.

#### EXERCISE TWO

##### Alms

For the group to take one person on a pleasurable journey, which is a multi-sensory experience in a safe environment.

The group need to work as an ensemble and remain alert and committed to the exercises at **all times**.

As the facilitator ask for a volunteer to be the newcomer to the rest of the group's existing environment. They should leave the room.

Ask your group to create a ritual using movement and sound that could be interpreted as a place 'At the edge of the sky'.

They must decide among themselves who and/or what lives there.

How do they move?

How do they communicate?

How do they spend their time?

Do they feed themselves? If so, on what?

Allow your students to spend some time negotiating the above questions and formulating the different stages of the ritual.

The ritual should include a sound-scape and should involve an element of movement.

The ritual should be comprised of component parts using as many different sensorial stimuli as possible.

Ask the volunteer to return. The rest of the group will then take this person through the the ritual which they have devised.

#### De-brief

- Ask your students how they felt doing the exercise, was it a pleasurable experience?
- Can your students identify any moments where they felt worried or frightened – can they specify why this may have occurred?
- Ask your students how they felt about creating a piece of theatre which did not rely on traditional dialogue.



Students from the HalfMoon Youth Theatre 1992.



## ACTIVITY TWO

### Subtext Analysis Through Improvisation

#### EXERCISE ONE

##### AIMS

To explore how much of our desire for something or someone is actually articulated.

To examine the use of dual meaning or innuendo.

The writer chooses to explore the relationship between the two women in the play through the subtext. This allows the audience room to interpret the extent of that relationship.

a) With your class quickly jot down how you would define the relationship between Katherine and Evanna.

b) Please read the following piece of text with your students.

This scene was taken from Draft Two of 'At the edge of the sky'.

**Eve** Do you know if you make a sound here, any sound, it can travel all the way around the world and it can even be heard, in a sort of way, I read it in a book.

**Kay** How can that be true?

**Eve** Sound is energy Kay, the energy goes into the air and then it goes all the way around the world forever. It can't disappear, it's a scientific fact.

**Kay** My dad says that.

**Eve** It's in several books. If you said something, whispered something here now, it could go all the way to The Sahara Desert and fall in the ear of a big hairy camel herdsman who's having a sleep after drinking too much wine for his dinner. Go on, think of something to say.

**Kay** What's the point in saying anything, a camel herdsman in the Sahara wouldn't be able to speak English.

**Eve** It doesn't work like that. All that goes into his ear is energy, but he might be able to understand it, they didn't say in the book. Think of a rude word. Go on.

**Kay** A rude word?

**Eve** Something pretty rude and it'll have more energy.

**Kay** You think of one.

**Eve** Alright.

**They both think**

**Kay** How rude?

**Eve** Reasonably rude. What's yours?

**Kay** You say first.

**Eve** Erection.

**Both women are reduced to instantaneous hysterics.**

**Kay** You can't say a word like that to a camel man in the Sahara.

**Eve** Right. Now, you take a breath, and then you say it, and we'll see what happens. This is a scientific experiment.

*Erection. (Kay is finding it impossible not to giggle).*

*No, no concentrate.*

**Some deep breaths.**

*Stop it. Kay, now, when you're ready...*

*(strained silence) In your own time... your word, remember your word is only energy.*

**Kay** Erection

**Eve** No, I'm not getting anything... more concentration needed... and again.

**Kay** Erection... ERECTION!

**Eve** THAT'S IT! He's opened one eye, he's looking at his camel, 'who is this woman saying 'erection' in me ear?' He's asking.

**Kay rolls over on to Eve.**

**Kay** Stop it! Stop it!

**Eve** It's Kay Brennan!

**Kay** Don't tell him it was me!

**Eve** It was Kay, I'm very sorry she woke you up....

**Kay** It was HER idea!

**Eve** She knows some terribly rude words sir.....

**Kay** Stop, don't tell him anymore!

**Eve** BOSOMS!

**Kay** Stop it Eve, someone will hear!

**Eve** Jockstrap.

**Kay** Will you stop!

**Eve** Penis!

**Kay** NOOOO! Eve.

**Eve** He's shocked. He had no idea Kay. He says he always thought you were a nice girl.

**Kay is straddling Eve**

**Kay** That Saturday, when I found out you'd gone, I rowed and laid down on this stone to try and stop myself from missing you.

**Eve looks at Kay**

**Eve** Did it work?

**Kay doesn't answer**

At the edge  
of the sky



section three



## EXERCISE TWO

Divide your class into groups of four and then ask them to split themselves into pairs labelled 'A' and 'B'.

Pair 'A' represent Katherine and her alter ego.

Pair 'B' represent Eve and her alter ego.

Set the scene up as it is in the play (or along the same lines).

Still in the foursome pair 'A' go first.

Katherine must speak the words from the text.

Her alter ego voices how she really feels inside.

Eve responds with the lines from the text.

Her alter ego remains silent.

When the foursome have completed the scene, swap around and repeat the exercise as above this time substituting Katherine and her alter ego for Eve's.

Give the group 15 minutes to go through the exercise then reconvene and choose a group to present their work.

## De-brief

- Evaluate how each person felt participating in the exercise.
- Focus on the characters; who do your students identify as having power at the beginning of the scene?
- At what points do they feel the power base changed to vulnerability?
- How effective were the character's words in communicating what they were really feeling?
- What further information about the relationship between Eve and Katherine do they understand from the subtext?

## EXERCISE THREE

- a) Split your class into pairs labelled 'A' and 'B'.

'A' will represent Katherine.

'B' will represent Eve.

Ask Eve to sit on a chair.

This time the person playing Katherine will express to Eve how she felt when Eve left for England.

The person playing Eve should remain silent, she simply provides the focus for Katherine.

Repeat the basis of the exercise, this time substitute Eve for Katherine.

Ask the person playing Eve to express how she felt when she heard that Katherine was on the island.

- b) Go back to the original piece of text.

Set the scene up.

Now, just using the text, replay the scene.

The objective for the actors this time is to take on and use all the preparatory work (or rehearsals) leading up to this presentation (or performance).

Your students should aim to find a level of truth within the scene and use a spectrum of emotions.

## De-brief

- Ask your students how they felt doing the exercise.
- Ask the audience how they felt watching.
- Focus on how it feels to speak your mind and state how you feel.
- Discuss how it feels to lower your guard and make yourself vulnerable both from a personal and an actor's perspective.

## TEACHER'S NOTES

You should adopt the dual role of teacher and facilitator.

Encourage students to explore a range of emotions that go beyond surface level.

Aim to highlight areas in performance where personal experience can be drawn upon and used to increase the depth of a character.

Encourage a group dynamic where the spectator plays as important a role as the actor.

It is essential to de-brief at the end of each exercise.

Allow your group to make and accept constructive criticism.

Encourage your group to build on the observations made by others to enhance their performance skills.



Above left: HalfMoon Youth Theatre member.



Above right: a photograph reproduced from "Girls Are Powerful".

At the edge  
of the sky



section three



## ACTIVITY THREE

### Alms

- To push your group rigorously to think 'through' any situations they suggest – logically.
- To encourage them to consider the consequences of their actions; who will be affected.
- To highlight the positive aspects as well as the difficulties sometimes involved in negotiating with a parent.
- To encourage students to engage in 'problem solving'.

### EXERCISE ONE

- a) Quickly brainstorm how would you describe the relationship between Katherine and her father (e.g. is it positive/negative?).

- b) Please read the following piece of text.  
This scene was taken from Draft Two of 'At the edge of the sky'.

**Katherine gets out a hidden naggin bottle of whiskey. Jimmy's eyes fasten to it.**

**Jimmy** *What's this for? Have you been hiding this from me?*

**Jimmy goes for the bottle. Kay swipes it away.**

**Katherine** *You didn't know I always kept a bottle for emergencies, incase you got so mad, so violent, only the drink could control you.*

**Jimmy** *Katherine, you make me sound like The Devil.*

**Katherine** *You're the way you are because you want to be.*

**Jimmy goes to hit Katherine.**  
**They look at each other.**

Split your groups into pairs. One person will play Jimmy the other Katherine.

Ask each pair to work together and improvise the scene.

Bring the group back together again.

- c) Ask a pair from the group to re-run the scene they have been working on.

Now ask the person playing Katherine to relax. Ask the person playing Jimmy to come forward to be 'hotseated'.

Hotseating is a technique used to:

- draw more detailed information from the character through the process of questioning.
- draw more detailed information from the character by encouraging them to improvise on the 'hotseat'.

It is now the task of everyone else present to hotseat Jimmy.

As the facilitator, it is your task to ensure that 'Jimmy' does not evade any of the questions asked of him.

Questions could include:

**How do you feel?**

**Do you always use aggression as a means of problem solving?**

**Where are the rest of your children?**

**Why did they leave home?**

**Where is your wife?**

**How much of an influence do you think drink has on your behaviour?**

When you feel the group has a much clearer understanding of Jimmy's personal history end his hotseating session and repeat the exercise with Katherine.

Questions for Katherine could include:

**How do you feel?**

**Do you always focus on people's vulnerabilities as a means of problem solving?**

**Why haven't you left home?**

**Do you think you encourage your father's drinking habit?**



### EXERCISE TWO

Now come back to Jimmy.

Ask him what he would do if he could go back and relive the situation he has just experienced.

Set the scene up as Jimmy requests, and ask Katherine (and any other people that Jimmy identifies) to step back into the scene.

Replay the scene as Jimmy has outlined.

As the facilitator brief those watching to shout 'stop' if they feel the scene takes an unreal turn.

Ask whoever shouts stop to outline to the rest of the group what their alternative would be to what they have seen. Then ask the person who offered the alternative to take over from the actor/s on stage.

As the facilitator outline the alternative briefly to the group ensuring, that everyone is clear of the new objectives.

Ask the actors to re-enact this new scene. If any audience members feel the scene takes on an unrealistic turn, they must shout 'stop' and offer an alternative.

### De-brief

- Ask your students how they felt doing the exercise.
- Ask them if there is any need to seek outside help.
- If they think this is a positive idea who could they turn to?

At the edge  
of the sky



section three

### TEACHER'S NOTES

As the facilitator you should be 'BLOCKING' any unrealistic solutions.



## A Sanctuary In Devotion

"When lighting a candle the mind of a catholic often becomes a sanctuary from accepted doctrine. Symbolically the act should commemorate Christ, the Light of the World, but really it means anything from a desperate cry to a loving memory, from a plea for shelter to the profound scrutiny of a piece of wax."

Sean O'Casey

At the edge  
of the sky



section four



Catherine Pollock

## Interview with the Writer

**Why choose the 'stations of the cross' as a framework for the story?**

There are several reasons for choosing *The Stations of The Cross*. Firstly, I wanted to construct the framework of the play from experiences based on my own life and elements I was very familiar with. When I started thinking about the pilgrimage I remembered looking at the pictures of *The Stations of The Cross* in church when I was a child. I think churches can be very magical places especially for children, it's the unusual clothes, a stage, strange smells, candlelight, singing and when I was a child the priest spoke latin too.

Suddenly I started to recall the images I could still remember from *The Stations Of The Cross* and I realised how relevant they were to Katherine's story, because her story, the story of the play is about a kind of death and resurrection for Katherine. By the end of the play she has passed through the 'death' of some of her beliefs and she resurrects herself to go forward into a new life. The parallel was very similar.

**What function does 'Foxy' play in the narrative?**

Obviously, Foxy is very important in terms of the story of the pageant which is really a play within a play itself. And Foxy cares about Katherine but although she likes him a lot, she knows in her heart, that she wants more. I suppose that was how I felt when I was sixteen, and I could see my friends beginning to do things that they didn't really want to do. They would make decisions, get jobs, have boyfriends, even though sometimes they weren't very sure about it all because they were frightened; if they didn't accept what was on offer to them they would be left with nothing at all. I did it too sometimes, I always felt I should have a boyfriend and eventually I'd have to get married or else I'd end up being very

lonely, that was how I was brought up, in a Catholic country. Every woman was expected to marry, so many people decided to settle for what was expected of them early on in life. I questioned that, and the play is very much about the questions I was asking then, and I'm still asking now. Can we follow our hearts. How do we find the courage to listen to them?

**Do you have a specific image that you would like to convey to your audience regarding what/who lives at the edge of the sky?**

The strange thing about 'The edge of the sky' is that it's in a different place for everyone. We all have a horizon that demarcates what we have so far only dared to dream of, dared to aspire to, dared to reach for. Then, when we do not reach out, the next time we look, that edge has moved to a new place and we move on again.

In this society I believe we are not encouraged to be courageous, to discover our true potential, to follow our hearts. Often, the only growth that's encouraged is the development of certain skills that make us more employable, more convenient and productive for the workplace. But real growth isn't always that. It's about following hunches and daring to push the limitations we and others have put upon us. It's about seeing who we think we are and who we could be and discovering often that we have been wrongly defined by others all our lives and **we can change it.**

Whenever we arrive at an edge the first instinct is either to hold on or to go back. Yet it is only by moving forward into the unknown that real growth occurs, how else could we have learnt to walk, to swim, play the guitar, to write, to run, to love. Why is it that somewhere in childhood we stop

\* The Stations of the Cross mark the journey of Christ to Mount Calvary, his place of crucifixion.





taking risks? I believe it is somehow connected to the way adults are meant to be in our society. Successful adults are meant to be confident, in control, cool. We're meant to know what we're doing. We're meant to signal to others that we have a great life, we've made great decisions, we have a great partner and a great job. But life is not static, it is a moving, growing, developing quantity. We can either spend it struggling at the very edge of the familiar, trying to hold on or run back to convince ourselves that we're safe, or we can jump and swim for the horizon, enjoying the change of scenery on the way. The choice is ours yet we are rarely presented with it.

The people who live at The edge of the sky are following their hunches, knowing that all growth can be frightening sometimes, and focussing on delight in the change in their lives. They are striking out for new beginnings with courage in their hearts.

**What parallels could people from other religions draw from your use of Catholicism in the play?**

I chose to write from a Catholic perspective because I was brought up as a Catholic and although I no longer practice, Catholicism has had a profound effect on my life. Yet I have no desire to use any part of the story to either alienate the audience or make the story inaccessible. So, although I have used some of the ritual and storytelling of the Catholic church I have focussed this on a universal story, the story of a woman dying and being born again. This story, a parable of the souls development, is common to so many spiritual paths.

It is a tale of suffering and rebirth, it may be interpreted in many different ways and from many different cultural perspectives. Whether it is the path of reincarnation from the Buddhist perspective, the long walk back to The Father, Son, Grandmother Moon of The Native American Indians, or the journey with and towards the Spirit as many followers of a new age spiritual path might perceive it. The story itself is the oldest one ever told. The Greek Myths retold it over and over again. When we commit ourselves to growth and discovery, part of the natural process is to let go of the past, to release our old selves, to be renewed, to move forward on a different plain, to be reborn.

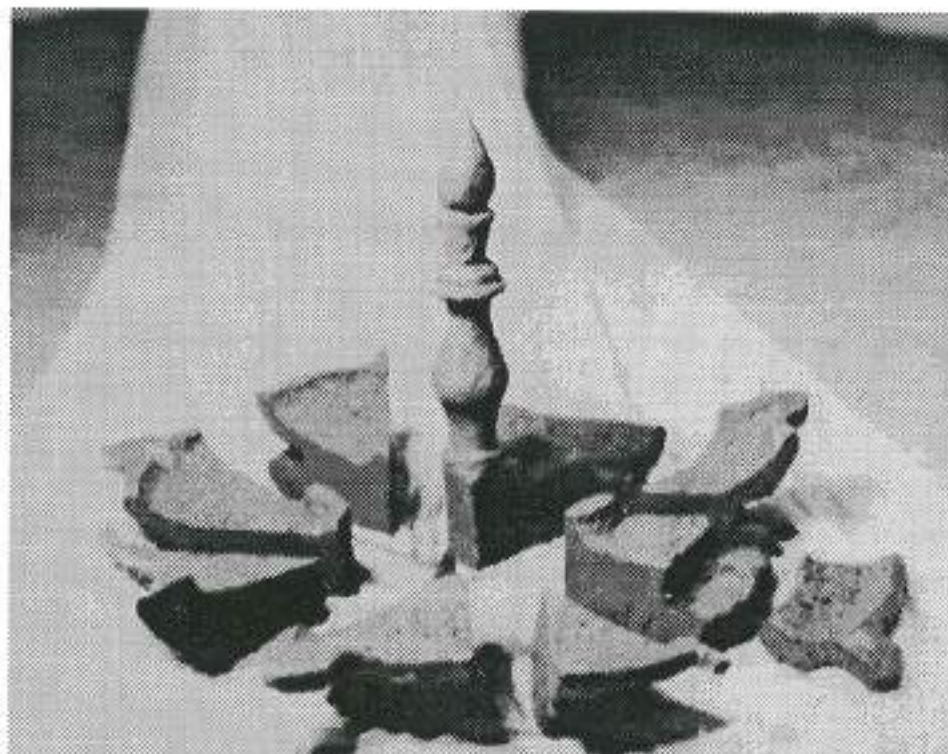
LIN COGHLAN



The top two photographs feature members of the HalfMoon Youth Theatre 1992, all other photographs are reproduced from 'Girls are Powerful'.







A Marriage of Inconvenience.

Photograph: Yvona Stephenson

## End Notes

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

**Across The Water**

(Irish Women's Lives in Britain)

Mary Lennon

Marie McAdam

Joanne O'Brien

Publishers: Virago

**A-Z Alphabet Poem**

Guardian, January 1988

**Girls Are Powerful**

(Spare Rib Young Women Writers)

Publishers: Sheba

**Just Like A Girl**

by Sue Sharp

Publishers: Pelican

**The Peopling of London**

(Fifteen Thousands Years of Settlement  
from Overseas)

Publishers: Museum Of London

### FURTHER READING LIST

**The Colour Purple:** Alice Walker

Publishers: The Women's Press

**Orlando:** Virginia Woolf

Publishers: Chatto/Hogarth/World's Classics

**The Passion:** Jeanette Winterson

Publishers: Penguin

**The Welsh Myth of Prince Llewellyn:**

Mabanoglan

Publishers: Bristol Classic Press.

## THE HALF MOON

THEATRE TRAINING YOUTH ARTS

43 Whitehorse Road, London E1 0ND

Tel: 0171 - 265 8138

Fax: 0171 - 702 7220

© Copyright Half Moon 1994

The HalfMoon endeavoured to seek permission to reproduce work by Caroline Jackson, Yvona Stephenson and the photographs entitled The Blackets, and Baltimore Railway Workers. We were advised to go to print as the publishing firm's concerned are no longer in operation.

# Halfmoon

As part of our GETTING AHEAD community initiative in Tower Hamlets, LEHMAN BROTHERS is delighted to enable the Half Moon to tour its new production into all Tower Hamlets secondary schools and to fund the Half Moon's new technical skills workshops in the performing arts for secondary school pupils in the borough.

