

‘CURRENT REGIMES’

A PLAY

&

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

by

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A thesis submitted to
The University of Birmingham
for the degree of
MPHIL(B) PLAYWRITING STUDIES

Department of Drama and Theatre Arts
The University of Birmingham
September 2010

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Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to a number of people without whom this play would not have been the same. Kate North, Steve Waters, Steph Dale, Naomi Cooke and my cohort on the Playwriting course.

I would also like to thank my parents.

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Fiona and Caroline are stressed. They're adopting a child together and decide to take a relaxing, last minute holiday to Spain. But there's a problem. The hotel's a fascist hotbed, there's a picture of the Dictator Franco above the twin beds (when they specifically booked a double), and the hotel's situated right next to Franco's grave at The Valley of the Fallen.

Writing the first words of an essay about writing a play is like writing the first words of a play. How much exposition will I need to give? The answer I think, like exposition in a play, is as little as possible: just enough back-story to back up the action or content.

Fiona announces she knew about the bizarre hotel. She in fact, has planned their stay there. In a mis-interpreted bid to give Caroline the family she desires, Fiona has initiated a quest to find the body of Caroline's Grandfather, Stanley Scott- an International Brigadier who fought and died in the Spanish Civil War.

Unlike a play however, this essay will detail the 'behind the scenes' process involved in the writing and re-writing of Current Regimes, as it is described above. This process will start by returning to the first instances of work on the play, where the primary task, was of course, to find something to write about, or as Tim Fountain puts it, find a narrative, '*a story only you know*', the playwright's equivalent to 'everyone has a novel inside them' (So you want to be a Playwright? 2007, p.4). But how do we find these stories? How do we shape them into plays? And what stories constitute good plays?

Whether or not it answered any of these questions, the story I wanted to write a play about wasn't '*a story only I knew*', but one which had caught and sustained my attention.

I read an article about the removal of Franco memorabilia from around Spain (Tremlett, 2009, ‘No Place to Hide’, *The Guardian*; please see my critical analysis’ title page).

I couldn’t stop thinking about the story and the way it connected to several other things I hope to engage with as a playwright. Both my two previous plays (The Measurements of a Murderer (2008) and The Operators (2009)) deploy a current affairs topic as a metaphor exploring feminist and lesbian politics (which I will discuss in detail later). Similarly, I hoped that the Post-Franco activities I had become interested in could be dramatised into another figurative consideration of the same issues.

By consecutively choosing to explore feminist and lesbian politics theatrically, I define myself implicitly as a political playwright. I hope to write drama which is ‘*geared toward a revolution, a cut in the historical process, an act that attempts to change suddenly the course of history*’ (Puchner, 2002, ‘Theatre as Manifesto’ in Theatre, p.453). I realise however, that this objective sounds rather grandiose. Perhaps, it would be better to quote Brecht, because in short, ‘*I don’t at all see why people shouldn’t get practical lessons from theatre, as well as everything else*’ (The Messingkauf Dialogues, 2002, p.8).

I decided the ‘*practical lesson*’ I would try to offer an audience with Current Regimes, was a commentary on another post-Franco movement: the exhumations (Wood, 2009, ‘Spanish Civil War Bodies Exhumed’, *The Guardian* (online)). In order to engage with this movement, I read the Spanish constitution, examined Franco’s notion of ‘family’ and its proliferation in Spanish contemporary society, queer transitions in Spanish culture, read up on ‘La Movida’, the post-Francoist cultural and artistic liberal movement, read Spanish feminist and lesbian novelists writing under Franco, contemporary Spanish drama and

British drama concerning The Spanish Civil War. All these topics, I decided, would be incorporated into a political play with myself as commentator.ⁱ

I believe that there are broadly two types of playwrights (and two types of writers in general): documenters and commentators. Commentators are political, they seek to catalyse or contribute to change through their writing, offering ‘practical lessons’ to their audiences. For example, Caryl Churchill acts as commentator by writing Seven Jewish Children (2009, *The Guardian* (online)). Conversely, documenters can be defined by Frayn’s synopsis of Chekhov, his ability to cinematically dramatise without comment:

‘Various critics have remarked upon the ‘colourlessness’ of his language. It is colourless in the same way that glass is colourless; we look straight through it without ever noticing it’ (Chekhov, Plays, 1993, p. xiii).

Frayn’s description of Chekhov’s work as glass might direct the reader to the movement of *naturalism* and Chekhov’s place in that movement (I will discuss naturalism later), but here, my point is different. This ‘glass’ like quality to drama e.g. the playwright’s stringent objectivity as opposed to polemicism, is something I think, playwrights, if they want to be commercial, must incorporate into their writing. And as much as I wanted to be a commentator, I still hoped that whatever play I wrote about the Spanish exhumations could also be commercial, part of, rather than against an industry. I also wanted to function, or

allow my work to do so, without allying myself (or it) too closely with pre-existing conventions, voices and ideologues. But glass I think, always needs to be shattered.ⁱⁱ

So before I contemplated how I was going to write this play and whether or not that was correlative to what audiences wanted or needed, I wanted to discover what I could give as a playwright: what type of voice I had (as opposed to political agenda), what type of voice I liked, how emulation become innovation (with respect to voice) and what writers would become the impetuses to the creation of my voice.

In choosing to write a commentary play, I hoped to model Current Regimes on similar research led projects such as Prebble's Enron (Royal Court Plays, 2010) and Hare's The Power of Yes (2009).ⁱⁱⁱ Despite liking these plays and the vein of theatre in which they sit, I had concerns though, that writing docu-drama '*seem[ed] like a kind of abdication of the writer's role to inhabit and to explain*' (Edgar, 2010, 'Enter the new wave of political playwrights', *The Guardian* (online)). But I wanted to 'inhabit' and 'explain'. In order to think critically about my voice and how to use for this purpose, I wrote a theatrical manifesto (please see Appendix I p.36).

I realised how much I aspired to emulate the playwright Howard Barker. His voice overflows with '*rich language, challenging ideas, history, beauty, violence and imaginative comedy, all brought together within the extremes of human experience*' (The Wrestling School (online)). I quote this caption from Barker's company's website rather than from one of his plays or theoretical Arguments for a Theatre (1993) because these are the qualities I hoped to instil within my own writing or voice. I decided that whatever I was going to write

in the ‘*recalcitrant medium of the theatre*’ would be written, or partly written in poetry or ‘*rich language*’ (Chekhov, Plays, 1993, p. xxvii). For example:

CAROLINE. It's distasteful to refresh the paint but not change the colour.
It's distasteful to whitewash over blood.
It's distasteful to wallpaper a wall
which men were shot against but not tear it down.

(Current Regimes, p.59).

I felt as if I'd found the territory of the play: the form, poetry and the content, collated research from which I could tease out characters and stories. However when I sat down to write, I still had no idea how to do what Egri describes as the necessity to ‘*fuse*’ first ideas into plot, character and dramatic structure (The Art of Dramatic Writing, 2004, p.93). I realised my desire to write a political play had overtaken my ability to construct one. All I had thus far was faceless facts and no way to personally connect with my research.

I attended a playwriting workshop at Soho Theatre. There, one seminar concluded that all ‘good’ plays are good, because through the ‘personal’ they evoke the ‘political’ (31 October, 2009). In other words, a playwright’s foregrounding of a seemingly benign topic can evoke (inadvertently or subtly) political themes or socially relevant issues. When I applied this theory to a play I knew well, Angels in America (Kushner, 1995), I found that I had understood another way to write politically and therefore another way to engage with my research on Spain.

Angels in America creates a political panorama of homosexual experience at one point in history. The dramatisation of homosexual experience amounts to much more than had Kushner sat down and wrote a play which read ‘listen guys, I’m going to tell you what it’s like to be gay right now’. That would be political didacticism and polemicism. Instead, Kushner puts the ‘private’ into his project, achieved through story, character and metaphor. For example:

Joe: Wait. For the good. Change for the good. America has re-discovered itself. Its sacred position among nations. And people aren’t ashamed of that like they used to be... (p.32)

Kushner takes the metaphor of America (its myriad populace and cultures, its clusters of ideologies and beliefs and figurative and real diseases) and through that metaphor, discusses the transitional notion of gay and gay community. Kushner takes ‘*the story only he knows*’ and transposes it onto a story all Americans know: the story of America (Fountain, 1997, p.4). Kushner’s project therefore, is more ambitious than say, the thematically similar Philadelphia(’s) (dir. Demme: USA, 1993). Philadelphia unintentionally limits the scope of its project by presenting the personal (homosexuality and AIDS vs. society) through a limited and obvious public (another ‘other’ - a black, albeit heteropatriarchal Denzel Washington). Conversely, Angels in America successfully details its personal subject matter (also homosexuality and AIDS vs. society) behind a unanimous public metaphor (America). It includes its audience rather than alienates, but in these terms it still seems more public than personal. That’s where Kushner’s characters come in. Characters are intimately drawn, but posited as (political) archetypes of the gay community: the outs, the ins, the drags, the

political and religious slant on these groups; the Republicans and Mormons. The plot reiterates and reoccurs within each of these social groupings and we see the effect of these political issues on a personal level.

Like Kushner, I started to think about putting my personal, or my subjectivised position, into the writing of Current Regimes. I believed that the only story I could write about contemporary issues in Spain would have to foreground characters (or a character) who personified my political position in response to my research. I narrowed my interests down to three words from which I hoped to construct a plot:

EXHUMATION

LESBIAN

FAMILY

Even though I was disinclined to identify (only) as a writer of lesbian theatre, or worse, feminist theatre, I decided I had no choice but to pursue the writing of this play in the way I had started to envisage it.^{iv}

I needed characters and a story. I decided to create a couple, a lesbian couple, whose understanding of, and particular reaction to the happenings in Spain, would document their ‘personal’, which would become public and political in both theatrical form and cultural significance. I decided to compare and contrast Spain’s exhumations, its concept of family and particular history of heterosexism with a lesbian couple’s frustrated and waning relationship. I called these two characters Caroline and Fiona, who, I decided, would go on a journey, similar to Cercas’ in Soldiers of Salamis (2004) or Funder’s in Stasiland (2003).^v

Around Fiona and Caroline I sketched out another four characters. They would manifest in the play merely for function, working as Fiona and Caroline's helpers, catalysts and obstacles to the objectives of finding family (in the past as Stanley and in the future as a child). Other characterisational pre-requisites included Spanish (seeing as the play was set in Spain) and involved implicitly in the process of exhumation.

These characters were Old Woman, Old Man, Francisco and Man. Old Woman and Old Man would convey the generic demographic involved in the exhumations. I decided that Old Woman would represent everything ethically unsound about the exhumation process and conversely, Old Man would represent everything affirming, profound and philosophical. Francisco, a child (named ironically after Franco), would be emblematic of the adoption procedure. Man would be a personification of the heteropatriarchal threat to the women's relationship; he is not the embodied desire for a man, but the dangerous possibility of Caroline conjuring an easy solution to her socially and internally difficult lesbian relationship.^{vi}

Now that I'd found characters and a plot, a story with both public and private elements, I turned my attention to *emplotment*. As with any play, the emplotment of Current Regimes would have to include organising the narrative and characters into locations, moments, events, internal chronologies and tenses (Edgar, How Plays Work, 2009, p.28). But where to begin? I started with a pitch for the play which chronologised the scene by scene progression I'd imaged (please see Appendix II p.39). Although this exercise was integral to my writing process, once I'd actually sat down to write, the narrative changed dramatically.

The first draft told this story: Caroline and Fiona arrive on honeymoon in Spain. There, Caroline tells Fiona that she has ulterior motives. She wants to find and exhume her father, who she believes fought in the Spanish Civil War. Fiona is given an ultimatum to help her, which she agrees to. She takes Caroline on the quest proper, where they find themselves in a variety of locations, meeting the ‘real’ characters of Old Woman, Francisco, Man and Old Man over the two week period of their holiday. Eventually, Fiona, determined to satisfy Caroline’s demands for family, buys a skeleton from Old Woman and presents it to Caroline as her ‘father’. Meanwhile, Caroline has had intercourse with Man and both actions simultaneously destroy the relationship.

In order to emplot the narrative detailed above, I started writing four long scenes, organising them into this pattern: 1) Hotel bedroom, 2) Graveyard, 3) Mountains, 4) Hotel Bedroom. The project of each scene was to mimic the dangerous fluctuations in the relationship of Fiona and Caroline in response to the stimuli of The Spanish Civil War. For example: 1) Hotel bedroom=Together. 2) Graveyard= Apart (Fiona pursuing her objective- providing Caroline with family, cue Old Woman and Francisco). 3) Mountains=Apart (Caroline pursuing her objective- explaining what she really wants, cue Man). 4) Hotel bedroom=Together (but damaged-the obstacle: they’ve gone too far pursuing personal objectives to ever be together again).

Although I’d assumed the locations of graveyard and mountains contributed symbolically to representing the waning relationship of Fiona and Caroline, the heterogeneity of the quest only displaced the characters and began to dwarf the play. As it stood, the quest threw up disparate images, scenarios, new characters and locations which, despite detailing the

exhumations in Spain, really detracted from the play's project: the internalities of a relationship (for example, please see Appendix III, p.43). Moreover, I was concerned by the sheer length the quest added to the play (over thirty pages), much to do with its reliance on movement, which I realised, after studying the differences between filmic and theatrical modes on the MPhil programme, is a specifically filmic possibility.^{vii}

In order to adjust the imbalance that the quest was yielding, I chose to engage in more research. Again, I believed that if I knew more about the happenings in Spain, I would be able to consolidate the quest into a succinct metaphor rather than gargantuan pataphor. Until the third draft of the play, however, I had not named Caroline's Grandfather, the soldier Fiona wants to find for Caroline. Nor had I considered an identifiable trajectory of objective, obstacle and action which Fiona could follow in order to find this man. In response to these unanswered questions that the play was throwing up, I started thinking about writing a Stanley Scott into the play.^{viii}

In the third draft version of the play, Fiona became a researcher researching Stanley Scott. She has taken Caroline on a research trip and they plan to have a holiday around her work. Their adoption looms. Caroline becomes interested in the milieu: the ongoing exhumations. She mixes up the similar rhetoric of the exhumation and adoption until her desire to be a mother is transposed into a desire to find and parent Stanley Scott. However, at this juncture, Steve Waters' advice helped slow the high-octane research I was pouring over the play.

'You have continued in this last draft to make astonishing discoveries but the play is losing its core focus...there is a real danger of the play breaking up into peripheral and abstruse material' (Waters, E-communication, 2010).

Although the play was awash in confusing images and scenarios, I believed that these processes of research had still been valuable; they had contributed something to the play which is much more fundamental than plot or character. The wider set of concerns which were distilled into narrative also added to the '*world*' of the play, (and my ability to imagine and write) the scope and environment, the characters, their journey, the dialogue, locations and symbols (Fuchs, '*Ef's visit to a small Planet*' in Theatre, 2004). However, there was no order to this world; its elements were in chaos.

I decided to look again at one aspect of the play in particular: Caroline's desire to find a child or a father, or any family in Stanley Scott. I hoped to convey her excruciatingly painful objective for children in a barren relationship. However, Caroline's desire, through my own lack of thorough contemplation, had been reduced to mere assertion foregrounding image and action. For example:

CAZ. Gestation, conception, then of course pregnancy and birth. Except, you know, it's funny, because I never conceived Stanley.

CAZ undoes her top then takes it off entirely.

I've been staring at a map of Spain my whole life wanting to feel something like patriotism.

(From the third draft of Current Regimes, where incidentally, Caroline was called Caz).

Before writing the fourth draft, the one you'll read here, I realised that I had given Caroline too little significance (and personality). This was partly intentional; despite the fact that she is the protagonist, Caroline's status is limited in the first act until she realises the nature of the visit to Spain (exemplified by her recurrent questioning). However, I'd neglected to allow her status to grow, or return to her a sense of success or failure (e.g. power) correlative to her actions and the genre of the play (e.g. failure for a tragedy). I chose to rectify this primarily with a gesture to set. I rewrote the last act of the play so that Caroline could become active by proving to Fiona that the couple needn't have come away at all, in fact, they didn't. As the ultimate reversal to Caroline's previous position as victim of Fiona's mad tirade in Spain, I had decided to reduce the action until the ancillary characters are now figment characters (inside the imaginations of Fiona and Caroline); they enter one location, the hotel room, which Caroline reveals ultimately to be their bedroom at home. The 'one room' set I was now envisaging was similar (except for the reversal) to Dennis Kelly's Orphans (2009), which is set entirely in a couple's dining room.^{ix}



At a particular production of Orphans (dir Roxanna Silbert, Soho Theatre, 2009), the mise-en-scene was heightened further by the stage design: the dining room is set back, darkened by the dank and dangerous ‘real’ world at the edges of the set.^x

Like Orphans, I decided that my final draft should revert to what I’d considered initially, then discounted: the possibility that the locus of the play’s action should be in one environment: the hotel room. In this setting, the story would gather momentum over time. Things would not be what they seem, Fiona hasn’t told the truth, the plot is amended, built up, torn down again by Caroline’s lies, built back up again and finally torn down like the picture of Franco, which is ultimately torn down to reveal the couple haven’t gone to Spain at all. Moreover, I decided that like Orphans, Current Regimes should run for little over an hour: the hour before bed.

Although I looked to Orphans for inspiration in terms of staging a play in one room, I was still interested in a bolder theatricality (in terms of set and ‘on set’ action), which plays structured like Orphans avoid with assistance from the ‘off-stage’, both a generic possibility of theatre and a limitation. The first draft of Current Regimes had not taken into account the possibility of an off-stage: the fact that things not represented on stage can play just as large a part in a theatrical experience. To create the type of theatre I was interested in however, I decided I would have to make new gestures to staging which allow the uncanny from the world outside to infiltrate the stage, similar perhaps to Sarah Kane’s Blasted (2001). Blasted is a play which is entirely set within one room. Unlike Orphans however, Kane allows the safe space of the ‘real’ and immediate location to be invaded and altered irreversibly by new elements and characters.

My first gesture to the gradual dissolving of the ‘real’ environment in the hotel room was to write a scene in which Caroline and Fiona gradually deconstruct the room until it becomes the site of the exhumations with a grave between the twin beds (please see p.97). Similarly, my last decision regarding the play was to write the morphing of the hotel room in Spain into the couple’s bedroom (please see p.130). By subverting the preconception of realistic environment or concrete space however, I realised I was making both structural and stylistic decisions relating to the genre of the play, which needed theoretical consideration as well as creative.

I decided to write two of the three acts in a *naturalistic* mode. By naturalistic, I refer to the theatrical movement which prioritises ‘*an objective portrayal of daily life that appears true*

to the spectator or reader's actual experience' (Innes, 'A Sourcebook on Naturalist Theatre', 2000, p.4).^{xi} This was my imagined act structure of the play:

1. Reality (Naturalism, or the illusion of it e.g. the 'hotel' room).
2. The unreal (Rejection of realism and naturalism in poetic form e.g. the quest).
3. Reality (Naturalism via deconstruction e.g. the hotel room becoming bedroom).

I started writing an opening act which would take place in a highly realistic environment, with very little scope for movement outside the spatial and temporal present of the scene. Naturalistic in time and realistic in space, I looked to Tennessee Williams' long opening scene in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (2009). From the first scene in my play I would, like Williams does, connect with the ideological landscape of the play and implicitly reject the realism attached to it.

In order to create smooth transitions between the diverging theatrical modes, I allowed some slippage either side of an act. For example, although two thirds of the first act are naturalistic, Old Woman enters and catalyses an early rejection of the mode. Additionally, throughout the play, I hope to create a sense of uncanny by allowing Fiona and Caroline to make reference to the facade of the hotel room. E.g. If the couple were really in a hotel, it would be unlikely that Fiona would shout:

FIONA. That was inherited crystal! (p.79)

when Caroline smashes a glass. Ironically, by paying attention to slippages or mistakes, I hoped to provoke a political Brechtian or Artaudian ‘shattering’ of audience assumption: ‘*The nightmares in painting are striking because they juxtapose the real world with a mere caricature of the world*’ (Artaud, The Theatre and its Double, 1995, p.53).

Even though I sought to leave the audience in a ‘nightmare’, an uncertain place through the sudden morphing of location, after the earlier confusion evoked by proliferation of the quest, I decided to pay extra attention to comprehensibility, ensuring that the audience could follow the action and ultimate realisation that Spain, as location, is a ‘caricature’ envisaged by Caroline. I hoped to achieve this by reconsidering the representation of characters, pinpointing Fiona and Caroline’s language, re-defining what they wanted, what they most feared, and most importantly, how they expressed themselves and how that impacted on the metaphorical world (set) surrounding them. If I really developed who my characters were, the final shape of the play would manifest organically.

In making the decision to prioritise Fiona and Caroline, I was implicitly prioritising the deployment of the dramatic device of character, which is contrary to traditional playwriting pedagogy. The power balance of plot over character established by Aristotle over 2500 years ago stipulates ‘*most important of all is the structure of incidents, not of man*’ (Aristotle in Egri, 2004, xviii).^{xii} Nevertheless, the devices of plot and character, I decided, could not figure discretely or hierarchically in the play that I’d was writing. Fiona and Caroline were the lifeblood of the plot; their journey would be the plot, therefore as devices, they would become a larger component of the play than plot itself. This decision went alongside my theoretical position; I think an isolated deployment of plot or character does not offer an

audience the same ontological reassurance that it used to. For example, Martin Crimp's The City (2008) is similarly disillusioned with isolated figuring (and traditional hierarchy) of plot and character. The City ultimately reveals that plot is an artifice to be manipulated and warped by character. However, there was something other than my theoretical position on character which made me want to develop that component of the play, I also felt writing character was my weak point.^{xiii}

As I have discussed, as a writer, I usually prioritise the poetry and overall sonic quality of my characters, which includes a deliberate lack of three-dimensionalising. The basis of this is theoretical and part of a theatrical trajectory initiated by Brecht's dramaturgy, which also catalysed my desire to write political plays. In my opinion, there should be no such thing as an actor 'in character'. Mimetic representation (if we should call it such) should be 'shattering' (part of the 'glass shattering' I discussed before), dismantling both bourgeois assumption and fourth wall mentality that character equates to person (Pavis & Shantz, A Dictionary of Theatre Terms, 1998, p. 235). Because I subscribe entirely to the 'death' of naturalistic representation of 'people' toward '*the unfolding of character to the more abstract interest of the play on ontological and ideological levels*', I hoped an audience would think critically about the words rather than identify emotionally with character (Fuchs, The Death of Character, 1996, p.35).

Current Regimes, I thought, would be no different; I felt dedicated to using Fiona and Caroline as '*mouthpieces*' because of the political task I'd set for myself. I wanted to write characters which could contribute to the necessary proliferation of lesbian identity on stage

and in doing so, I hoped I would be writing both for and against earlier theatrical representations of lesbians, namely those of Sarah Daniels.

'Daniels's negotiation of feminism and dramatic form creates the opportunity for drama in which lesbians can be the focus of the action in mainstream theatres'
(Bartleet, 'Feminist Enque(e)ry' in New Theatre Quarterly, 2010, p.155).

Daniels' plays deal (almost singlehandedly on the British Stage) with lesbian subjectivity. Neaptide (1997) is the most 'public', engaging with the legislative problematic of homosexual experience in terms of child caring/bearing. Despite being grateful to playwrights such as Daniels, who profiled lesbianism on stage and therefore contributed to the fact I can do so with relative ease; I still feel there is something ultimately derogatory in Daniels' approach. Daniels' plays are littered by disastrous heterosexual unions and frequently, indeed in almost every play, these relationships are contrasted with happy, emancipated lesbians.

Grace. Young man. I am done. Done with thee all.

(Byrthrite, 1997, p.394).

Daniels' lesbian characters and their relationships are idyllic and sentimental, especially when compared to say, to Claire Chafee's emotionally truthful Why we have a Body (1994).

Same sex unions, especially in Gut Girls (Daniels, 1997), are posited as a separatist feminist playing card, rather than actual identity. This ultimately conflates the reality of heterosexism with a current and contextual anti-feminist feeling. Instead, I hoped that by foregrounding the reality of Fiona and Caroline's relationship (rather than positing it as a viable feminist option), I would contribute to an in-depth, on-stage representation of homosexual relationships away from idealism and the function of proliferation.^{xiv}

However, there was something which would initially obstruct my achieving this level of characterisation: the fact, as I have already said, that I wanted to write character's speech in poetry. Prior to the MPhil, I had written all my plays in poetic verse. My characters spoke in heightened, proclamatory language, monologue and fragmented monologue and communicated with the audience rather than each other. As I started to write the characters of Fiona and Caroline, my natural inclination to heighten the poetic form of their speech by emphasising rhythm and line-ending etc. overrode a purer conflict behind the words.

CAROLINE. You do, I know you do.
 Or you did.
 You said.
 You brought me here.
 You've been planning this for the last two years.
 You said.

(First Draft of Current Regimes).

At a table-top reading of the first draft, feedback suggested that Fiona and Caroline assumed a sameness of voice. There was no idiom, no linguistic separation, and worse, the gradual divergence of Fiona and Caroline (which is the whole plot of the play) was swallowed up by

linguistic similarity. Hoping to learn a little more about dialogue and speech, I looked to playwrights whose work contains tropes I could learn from.

Like Doug Wright's I am my own wife (2005), debbie tucker green's (sic) Random (2008) is a one-hander which requires a (female) actor to play all characters. In performance, this play allows the talents of the actor to dwarf the acute definition of voice manifest in the script.

When I read the play however, I realised that tucker green's definition of voice, her equipping each character with their own linguistic preoccupations, phonetically written accents, rhythms and a dialogic limitation was what made these characters so individual despite their single mimetic representation. Moreover, tucker green manages all of this within a poetic form e.g. attention to line breaks and emphasis on internal rhymes, dynamics and rhythms. For example:

Brother. 'Anythin to eat-'
Mum. Like iss hotel.
Brother. 'Anythin to eat?'
Mum. Like mi favour landlady.
Brother. 'What is there to-'
Mum. 'Porridge.'
Brother. "That?"
Mum. "That". (p.10)

Similarly, Mamet's use of dialogue always foregrounds individualised idiom in a rapidity of exchange. The monosyllabic waterfall conversations which make up his plays seemed, like

tucker green's work, an appropriate model to mimic when constructing dialogue inside a pre-existing relationship (that of Caroline's and Fiona's). For example:

Danny. So how'd you do last night?
Bernie. Are you kidding me?
Danny. Yeah?
Bernie. Are you fucking kidding me?
Danny. Yeah?
Bernie. Are you pulling my leg?
Danny. So?
Bernie. So tits out to here so.

(Plays, 1994: Sexual Perversity in Chicago, p.47).

The result of this attention to dialogue was rewarding; for the first time, I wrote character-establishing dialogue which contributed both a sense of relationship and individual (for example, see p.73).

Similarly, I hoped to redefine the ancillary characters of the play. I undertook this task by attempting to develop a deeper understanding and appreciation of writing character in all dramatic modes. I was interested in Linda Segar's advice on character, which originates from early structuralist Vladimir Propp's assessment of character as fulfills of certain roles in narrative (Creating Unforgettable Characters, 1990, p.82; Morphology of the Folktale, 1968). Segar acknowledges that characters should prove useful in the propulsion of plot, but also create a sense of real psychologism. From reading this, I saw no reason why these two

components of character necessarily should be embodied within one persona. Because Fiona and Caroline portray a psychological realism (especially in language use), I felt free to emphasise Man's, Old Man's, Old Woman's and Francisco's functionality (as described earlier). These characters, I hoped, when reduced to their mythic function, would seem similar to Lorca's characters in his Puppet Plays (1990), which are marionetteish, half-alive, strange, one-dimensional, representing an uncanny world of 'otherness'.

The largest inspiration to my deployment of character, right down to the naming (or unnaming of my characters as Man, Old Man etc.) was Strindberg's trilogy of plays, The Road to Damascus (2006). These plays make up a marriage drama, Strindberg's own creative autobiography which centres on the characters Stranger and The Lady, a little like Caroline and Fiona on a quest together and apart, half inside themselves, half outside.

Reading The Road to Damascus also contributed to the process of re-thinking ancillary characters in my play, their uncanny intervention into Fiona and Caroline's thought processes. I was inspired by Mother's reaction to Stranger in The Road to Damascus Part I:

MOTHER.

And remake her in your image? I've been told that country wizards carve images of their victims and give them the names of those they'd bewitch. That was your plan: by means of this Eve, that you yourself had made, you intended to destroy the whole sex! (p.37)

I was inspired by the way Mother acted as a spokesperson for Stranger, or at least contributed to his characterisation by hypothesising about his objectives. Old Woman, I hoped, would function similarly, as a spokesperson for Fiona's true intentions in bringing Caroline to Spain. Moreover, the narration (rather than exposition) of Old Woman would offer the play a different world view consisting of fragments, warped ideologies and logics and strange philosophical musings, which create a wider, more magic realist lens through which the actions of Fiona and Caroline are viewed. This lens of character, I hoped, created a sense of tableau vivante; Fiona and Caroline's own psychologism personified around the stage through mimesis and set (e.g. the pervasive image of Franco as symbol of Caroline's response to the heteropatriarchal world she must exist in).^{xv}

Strindberg's stylistic concerns in The Road to Damascus are often heralded as an example of theatrical *expressionism* and its stylised and highly subjectivised perspective of reality. As I was reading Strindberg's plays, I started consolidating my ideas and shaping my play, and I became aware of its own expressionistic qualities.^{xvi} The highly subjectivised perspective of The Road to Damascus made me reconsider the point of view from which the second act is seen. It is here that Fiona and Caroline would encounter and expose their worst fears and fantasies. At first I hoped to achieve this by creating a sense of panorama within that relationship, imposing on it all the historical objections to a homosexual union, similar I thought, to The Tricycle Theatre's recent 'Then and Now' project.

During June and running into July 2010, the Tricycle Theatre was showing 20 premieres of 20 new works by women playwrights about females, power and politics. The plays were commissioned to resonate and respond to the contextual change in women's roles in this

political climate, or rather the lack of change. The double bill of plays was umbrella termed ‘Then’ and ‘Now’. The concept: to compare the circumstances of women (in power) then and now, and for an audience to contemplate if women’s rights and experiences have actually changed as a result of these historical and contemporary paradigms.

I wanted my play to concern the *nows* and *thens* of heterosexism (as opposed to homophobia); the conflation of time and space within the characters of Fiona and Caroline. My aim was to create a lesbian couple through whom I could posit a question: has social and legislative heterosexism altered? In order to represent this via character, I focussed on the couple dealing with a complex problem e.g. adoption. Within that context, I try to use a rhetoric which alludes to the historical struggle of homosexual unions throughout history. This involved a certain amount of dismantling of character which, I hoped would contribute to a sense of panorama (please see Appendix IV p.46). The realisation of this objective however, was not entirely successful.

‘I don’t understand how to play that’.

‘Why the hell would I be saying that now?’

‘I haven’t a clue what’s just happened.’

These were all reactions voiced by the actors playing Caroline and Fiona in preparation for the playwrights’ workshop in June 2010. Director Naomi Cooke had asked the actors to read the entire play aloud. I realised that although I had thought about clarity of character from an audience’s perspective, listening perhaps to Mamet’s advice: ‘*the audience will teach you*

how to write' (True and False, 1997, p.19), I had not considered character as thoroughly from the perspective of the actor. For instance, I had not engaged fully with the 'actioning' required in the mimetic representation of characters.^{xvii}

In order to fix this problem, I did two things. The first was to relocate the panorama of time and space I'd initially hoped to instil within the characters of Fiona and Caroline into a phantasmagoria of ancillary characters. To make the adoption more pertinent to the action, I allowed the character of Old Woman to morph into Bev, the previously off-stage adoption officer. Ultimately however, I decided to make all the ancillary characters playable by one actor. I did this for these reasons: to support the limited role of Francisco (who now functions entirely as an off-stage character), to allow subtext to seep into the foreground through the one-dimensionalising of ancillary characters, to streamline the play for production and primarily to enhance the representation of the fluidity of time and space.

Secondly, I decided to examine the ways in which I could help the actors playing Fiona and Caroline to read and represent the play in performance. I integrated a more liberal use of punctuation into the play to aid in delivery; I used pauses, silences and beats for the same effect of creating human rhythm in text (please see the production note on p.53). I personalised pauses, beats and stage directions and found that by paying attention to breath, actors could grasp the difference in length between a personalised pause or action, for example:

FIONA. *Pause.* Okay.

and a pause or action written into the margin, between characters' speech, which lasts longer as it takes up more space on the page.

The role of the playwright, ultimately then, when finalising a script, becomes its choreographer or conductor, paying attention to rhythms, dynamics, stresses, slurs, sequences, silences and codas e.g. the third act coda, rather than climax.

In conclusion, although I still consider Current Regimes to be in development, I am pleased with the transition of original intention into script: the amalgamation of the issue of the Spanish Exhumations with the play's political objective of foregrounding lesbian identity on stage through poetic expressionism.^{xviii} Ultimately however, I hoped that by writing Current Regimes, I had written a play which not only substantiates, explores and evolves my own theatrical understandings (assimilating ideas and concerns from the MPhil in Playwriting), but which engrosses and involves a spectator in a 'world', a world which becomes ultimately commercial entertainment, glass which always shatters (Fuchs, 'EF's visit to a Small Planet' in Theatre, 2004).

ENDNOTES:

ⁱ When I looked for examples of the same project (of theatrical commentary on Spain), Sam Boardman Jacobs' Play Federico with Me (2003) alongside his translation of Lorca's The Public (2004) were incredibly helpful. In The Public, there is a quintessentially Spanish reference to death in everyday speech, which I thought would be particularly pertinent to the subject matter of my own play. For example '*Third Man: It's on the theatres that we call; because it's at theatres where the truth can be found about graves*'. (p.4)

ⁱⁱ When I say 'shattered', I refer to the formal effect a playwright can create when politicizing stage conventions by departing from them or more generally, altering that which usually occurs at a theatrical event. E.g. Beckett's Waiting for Godot (1998) shatters spectator's expectations of narrative lineation (or indeed any forward moving action) by refusing to deploy a temporal shift subsequent to the interval. In other words, what an audience expects to happen, or indeed, that they expect something to happen at all, is entirely departed from. Similarly, if David Eldridge's tryptic version of Beckett's structure (deployed with character shifts rather than temporal stagnation) in Under a Blue Sky (2005) is anything to go by, then the 'shattering' a contemporary audience experiences when a playwright experiments with convention has significantly lessened. Perhaps the dissemination and popularity of film-makers' recent endeavours in structural experimentation contribute to theatrical spectators' acclimatisation to what used to be specifically theatrical '*consciousness-raising*' attempts (Freeman, 1997, p.13). Films such as Irreversible (dir. Noé, 2002) do, like Waiting for Godot, experiment successfully with our preconceptions of storytelling. I came to the conclusion that any 'shattering' effects I would deploy within this play would therefore have to be significant, but still conform to theories which refer to 'shattering' (I talk about Brecht's later), but also worth mentioning is Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty, which looks to shatter 'cruelly' (to a greater or lesser extent) our false sense of reality. '*We are not free and the sky can still fall on our heads. And above all else, theatre is made to teach us this*' (Artaud, Theatre and its double, 1995, p.60).

ⁱⁱⁱ These plays are examples, I think, of the genre of political theatre as it currently stands in the UK (perhaps as it used to define verbatim theatre). '*The political theatre of the noughties ... took the form of documentary, from strict verbatim theatre like the Tricycle Theatre's reconstructed inquiries, via interview-based plays like Victoria Brittain and Gillian Slovo's 'Guantanamo' and Robin Soans's 'Arab/Israeli Cookbook', to looser dramatisations of real events such as David Hare's Iraq-invasion play 'Stuff Happens'*' (Edgar, 2010, *The Guardian* (online)). Although I hope to write political plays like these, or rather, theatre with an objective other than entertainment value, I try to write for what I consider the broadest audience to be: one which is '*ready-made*' and '*theatre-going*', an audience with preconceptions about theatrical entertainment, and political stances which can be reversed, subverted or removed (Kershaw, 1992, p.17; Scollen, 2008, p.12).

^{iv} I realise by allying lesbian theatre with feminist theatre, I undermine much feminist and lesbian practice to separate these issues, but I speak from what I find; usually, especially in theatre, these two diverging systems are conflated. For example, the playwright Sarah Daniels has, over the years, been subject to a series of reductive reviews and criticism such as '*man hating playwright*', '*the only radical lesbian playwright to have made it*'...Instead of answering back from a lesbian position, she tackles the issue with feminist rhetoric: '*Feminism is now like a panty-girdle, a very embarrassing word. Once seen as liberating, it is now considered to be restrictive, passé and undesirable to wear.*' (Daniels in Stephenson (ed), 1997, p.37). However, when '*the authoritarian art form is the musical*', and when new writing theatres or '*straight play*' producing theatres and companies still seem to be Thatcher's concentration camps, I realised that considering my opinions on contemporary theatre, I had no choice (Barker, 1993, p.17). How many times does Eve Ensler or Gut Girls (Daniels, 1997) have to do the regional theatre circuit before a man (unless it's a public school educated woman (it's the same as UK politics) in a literary office decides it's time for another feminist/lesbian playwright to have a go (at least, just for the quotas)? My decision was that if literary managers decide that it might be time to hear from what is facilely labelled a 'new' and 'minority voice', then my work, underscored by a topic already in the public eye (the Spanish Exhumations) would be ready.

^v In each of these non-fictional works, the first person narrator become fascinated respectively with one particular historical story in which they themselves genealogically figure- the use of the document for understanding self. Similarly, I hoped my play would become a non-fictional document of findings; its fictional characters, Fiona and Caroline, would present my own interest in Spain and my findings as their own.

^{vi} All the characters aside from Fiona and Caroline are Spanish, and I worked hard to grasp a particular sense of Spanish idiom. E.g. I made use of conventional Spanish idioms in translation: *Man. From such a stick, such a splinter* (p.115). However, it did cross my mind that in making these characters less 'dimensional' than their British counterparts demonstrated a form of colonialism, perhaps I think, like Orwell's Homage to Catalonia (1989) does when discussing The Spanish Civil War from the diminutive position of an educated outsider: '*It was beastly while it was happening but it is a good patch for my mind to browse upon*' (p.84). Moreover, I did

not want the play to become an attack on Spain, the principles of family in Spain, or a perceived or real residual homophobia. Point of view therefore had to be stronger than ever and later on in the main body of the essay, I will discuss the ways in which I subsumed these Spanish characters into the minds, rather than the realities of Fiona and Caroline as a way to alleviate any of the above problematics.

^{vii} Unlike theatre, film has potent kinetic energy, the possibilities of invasive movement (into anywhere and anything). These include rapid alteration of environment, scenic shifts made through jump cuts and interwoven textures, which theatre cannot evoke nearly to the same level. Film on the other hand, is handicapped by the necessity to remove a narrative from '*the mindscape of dramatic action*', the first person (Field, 2005, p.259). Unlike film, theatre and its claustrophobic spaces and upfront mimetic representation can unlock psychology and story inside a character in a way that film, as a behaviourist medium, cannot. Although I realised that the movement of scenes in Current Regimes' first draft was implicitly and unhelpfully filmic, I increasingly thought about making use of theatre's qualities (such as its ability to stage one environment) and subvert at the last minute, the tendency for an audience to assume that theatre is always naturalistic (because of its immobility, its concreteness).

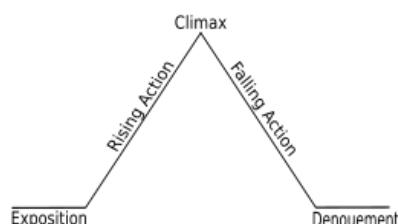
^{viii} Giving Caroline's Grandfather the identity of Stanley Scott was a seminal moment in the writing of the play. This is how it transpired: before starting to write the third draft of Current Regimes, I went to Italy for a couple of days. I stayed with Francesca, a friend, and was celebrating her finishing a PhD. There, Francesca asked me about the play I was writing. I told her I was writing about The Spanish Civil War. To help, she told me this: Each summer as a child, Francesca arrived at a pebbledash terraced house near Oxford, where she would stay for 12 weeks of the year in order to learn English. Her host family was an elderly couple. The wife doted on Francesca and they wrote to each other until she died. The elderly husband doted on Francesca even more. When he died, she cried for him, like you'd cry for a father. The husband was the International Brigadier Stanley Scott (Stanley Scott is my own variation on this man's real name). Suddenly Francesca moved closer. 'It's not that I think you should write Stanley', she said. 'I would like you to, because I consider myself his child and I say it is important. You know Lucy, even Chirac said thank-yous to the French Brigadiers. Nobody thanked Stanley.'

^{ix} The dining room of a couple (Danny and Helen) who are about to sit down to dinner and celebrate her pregnancy. The dinner is disturbed by Helen's brother, Liam who bursts in covered in blood. The story unfolds: Liam has been at the site of accident. The story unfolds further: Liam might have had something to do with that accident. The story unfolds again: Liam was attacked. Further again: Liam had attacked. Further still: Liam is holding a man hostage in his mate's shed. Image on p. 13: Wakeham, J. (2009) Image of Orphans in production. www.jwakeham.wordpress.com/page/3/ [Accessed 21.08.10].

^x Similar to Orphans, in The National's recent production of J.B. Priestley's An Inspector Calls (dir. Daldry, 2009), the specified set, the dining room, was initially set back. Equally so, the proportions of the set were altered; the actors appearing larger than life in comparison. Perhaps these two recent productions, in disparate ways (considering Daldry is renowned for his film rather than theatrical credentials), are making new comments on naturalistic staging by reminding the audience about the world in which the play functions; the fact that whatever we see happening in these 'one room' productions is artificial.

^{xi} Naturalism is the dominant mode of theatre in both mainstream and fringe theatrical events, although it is commonly confused with *realism* which applies to the intended effect of naturalism: the stage techniques associated with it, such as intricate set, props, costumes and stage directions, for example, the way I have devised the hotel room (please see the stage directions on p.54). Naturalism, actually, refers to the theoretical basis shared by all the dramatists who forged the movement (for example Ibsen and Shaw), and their approach to representing the world.

^{xii} My decision not only contradicts Aristotle's pedagogy, but also his detectable legacy in the work of Freytag (Technique of the Drama, 2008). Freytag's triangle, despite its pinnacle of 'climax', still reiterates a mechanical lineation.



(Freytag, **Freytag's Triangle Diagram**, 1863.)
(www.nationmaster.com/Freytags_pyramid).

Freytag has in turn, inspired a contemporary pedagogy of plot lineation and emphasis on event: '*Is there a third act climax?*' (Fountain, So you want to be a Playwright? 2007, p.66).

^{xiii} Before I started writing Current Regimes, I had a developmental reading of my play The Measurements of a Murderer at Hampstead Theatre. Collated responses regarded my deployment of the device of character within the piece, and one comment particularly stood out: '*your characters are mouthpieces...why are you writing in this medium?*' (Anonymous Startnight Feedback, 2009).

^{xiv} Moreover, I hoped to deploy Fiona and Caroline's relationship as a paradigm of homosexual relations away from many representations of homosexuality on stage. For example, Mike Bartlett's Cock (2009) is a play about a gay/straight love triangle which has become a too renowned formula for the gay play. Many gay plays function around either a) the gay/straight love triangle, or b) the coming out of a character, and I did not want Current Regimes to fit into either pre-existing structure.

^{xv} In this way, I pay homage to a particular amalgamation of realism and expressionism which can be seen in Lorca's puppet play Christobical (1990): '*Painted on the backdrop, an Andalusian town with melancholy arcades. In the background, a big mountain in deep ochre, crowned by a blue-blackness where stars of live gold shine.*' (p.13).

^{xvi} Expressionistic drama is often defined as having these tropes: the spiritual awakening of characters, the attempt to make sense of self (often within particular political contexts), the suffering of the protagonist or struggle against authority usually conflated into the archetypal father figure. These tropes are generally structured episodically and labelled Stationendrama. These were all things that already unintentionally allied my play (especially its plot) with expressionism.

^{xvii} Director Max Stafford-Clark uses the practice of locating 'action' via the transitive verbs of the text (Edgar, 2009, p.48). The Dramaturg Caroline Jester uses the term to refer to the process by which an actor locates a character's objective (as the practice was defined by Stanislavski). (Jester, Caroline (Seminar, Birmingham University, November 3 2009), (Stanislavski An actor prepares, 2006).

^{xviii} When I say that the play is still in development, I'm referring to the fact that rather than taking Tim Fountain's advice and writing a play about '*a story only I know*' (2007, p. 4), I chose to tell a story I knew nothing about: a research led piece, which allowed for as much learning during the playmaking process as possible, as was proper to the MPhil.

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Appendix I

A Theatrical Manifesto

A THEATRE WHICH TAKES THE GIVEN and vice versa.

Theatre must function as a document of loss-

a loss of the expected, the ordinary spaces, scaffolded by the everyday. Theatre must not be an extension, a naturalistic extension in any way, especially linguistically. Theatre must be the site on which language cannot monopolise intended or interpreted meaning. In this sense, givens/logos/logic must be taken collectively and obviously. The given is language or word as the ultimate transmitter of anything, which on stage or script is dissolved as a notion, being performed, projected, added to aesthetically, auditorily and ‘other’-wise. Theatre must be ostracized, and ostracize from ‘reality’. Reiterations must not be given, but taken, and overtly. Large notices must be attached to the curtain, the blackbox, or any other dramatic environment, spatial or cognitive, must be flagged-up as artificial.

Theatre in this sense, must and does, engage with excess. For instance, the formal materiality of words, in other words, the acknowledgment of quotidian metaphoricality and roll with it. This would infer that theatre must infuse language with the attributes of actions: the active participant in the word is not the referent but the word itself. In this sense, theatre must too be self-conscious, a verfremdungseffekt: a quest for transference and the need for metaphor. Theatre must be obstacle to meaning, or easy meaning. Absurd or Expressionistic, meaning in microcosm, a word or phrase each dissonance, a concept, thread, plot, a macrocosmic meaning made obscure, obscene, stowed, deferred, slurred until suspended in interpretation.

This is more than meaning. Moreover, a meaning which must be implicated, culturally conjurable, drawing on everything audience/actor/character can define or surmise and not.

Meaning which sits in context and out of context. Understood and misunderstood. Meaning which is absorptive and anti-absorptive, given and taken.

Theatre must take and give and fuck the binary. (Female) experience in words, via words, via language and speech and communication is not implicit or reducible to one representation alone. Theatre must not show the clear cut because it is barren and does not belong, cannot belong. In this sense, pay attention to women, and therefore to poetry. The primary perception, the mother: the limitations of the word's efficacy; go for performability and more. Make shrill, disparate declarations and symbols. Facta non verba.

Theatre must be as necessary and collaborative as language itself and like language, through language and more, it will re-establish, re-configure emphasise the multi-faceted, garish brilliance of 'reality' without reduction into 'reality', commanding in its application of (old hat?) deconstructionalist theory to writing and gender. And what better place is theatre for the elastic geography of the cross-genre; disturbing a pastiche of cultural remembrances, in idiomatic, register, lilt, colloquial. In short, givens taken to ambiguities in the stretch, cat cradle, splinter, splutter, splatter: dissemination of all this within mimetic representation is key, and the dramatist must remember this. Theatre must take the given through ontological, philosophical confusion, someone's speculative, euphemistic, catechistic motions confined within language and phallogocentricity. This will be achieved through expressive psychologism, stylized abstraction and above all else, the metalanguage of the body. Now take an aggressive attitude toward the audience: redeploy lexicon, evade limitations and recover primary perception. Make an audience sweat revulsion, retort, recoil from inherited logic, and revel in it.

Appendix II

A scene by scene plot progression written before the First Draft of ‘Current Regimes’.

Prospective title: **No Place to Hide- Last Bastions**

Act I

Prologue- A poem by Lorca

Scene I

Contantino Mendez- defence secretary- Paraphernalia/nostalgia – Franco being torn down.

Legal battle over street names

2007 Law calling for Franco cull- Enforcing law-

Campaigners want the body of Franco to be moved- a corpse in the underground basilica at the Valley of the Fallen.

Scene II

A gay couple arrive on holiday in Spain, Granada/Andalucía . One is a poet coming to search for the remains of Lorca. They discuss their stay and talk about their experience thus far in Spain.

Scene III

An old man wants his father's body returned.

Scene IV

The couple discover that in '36, a month after the military coup which established Franco's government, Lorca was murdered as an anarchist and are brought back up to date over the

current enforcing of the law, which means actions are underway to search for his remains.

The couple discuss Lorca as a hero of the oppressed, oppressed in terms of his homosexuality.

Scene V

The old man locates his father. He was one of the labourers – a prisoner of Franco’s from the Republican side and his now one of the 40,000 corpses of civil war victims who are buried in tunnels and crypts surrounding the body of General Franco. He decides he won’t rest until he gets his father’s remains back.

Scene VI

The couple decide to go and support the dig for Lorca.

Act II

Prologue

Lorca reads his poem

Scene I

A Moorish gypsy sings a tribute to Lorca.

Scene II

Lorca’s family oppose the dig- as a paradigm for retrieving the bodies of Civil War victims.

Scene III

Diggers at the site of Lorca go on strike- in view of the political left wing sympathies and homophobia.

Scene IV

The couple in a restaurant. Ronda. Bullfighting origin. The couple queue up for the bullfight- Caz is beaten up in the crowd.

Scene V

The old man thinks he's located his son.

Scene VI

There are campaigns and protests for leaving the civil war victims where they are and keeping Franco despite the cleanse. There are homophobic attacks in view of the Lorca issue.

Act III

Scene I

Constantino Mendez- A choice between remembering Lorca or unremembering Franco.

Scene II

The dig for Lorca is stopped. The couple break up.

Appendix III

An extract from a scene from a previous draft of ‘Current Regimes’.

An example of the quest’s problems: the introduction of irrelevant characters, confusing locations and irrelevant story lines, which have now been omitted from the script.

Aparación con vida.

Darkness. The sound of birdsong. This is a forest. Lights on the mass grave between the beds. Tarpaulin. Dustbins turned over to make tables, buckets and washing up bowls, a selection of gardening gloves. OLD MAN, CAROLINE, and HELPERS 3, 4, 5 are stood by the side of the mass grave. HELPERS 1 & 2 are inside the mass grave (seen by the audience) softly brushing a skull (cheek up) on its side. There is a helmet next to the skull. HELPER 3 writes down notes.

HELPER 2. Young. Very young.

HELPER 1. Not so young. Bad incisors.

HELPER 2. Middle aged. Yes middle aged.

HELPER 1. Cracked jaw.

HELPER 4. Pass me the helmet.

HELPER 2. *Passes helmet.*

HELPER 4 tips the helmet upside down on a dustbin. It's full of dirt. Gradually he manages to empty the dirt out of it.

HELPER 2. Broken, self removed teeth.

HELPER 1. One cracked eye socket.

HELPER 4. Fucking fascist helmet.

CAROLINE. Is this a nationalist?

OLD MAN. No, he meant it's a difficult job.

HELPER 1. Can you get the lever?

Looking for lever:

CAROLINE. Lever?

HELPER 3. Lever.

HELPER 4. Lever.

HELPER 4. Lever.

OLD MAN. We don't have a lever.

HELPER 1. We don't have a lever.

HELPER 2. We don't have a lever?

HELPER 4. Someone cracked his head. Bashed his brains with the barrel of a gun.

HELPER 3. Pigeon toed, crooked backed, crushed hand, eyeless, spineless, with a red scarf tied around his neck. Of course someone took him out through the helmet.

OLD MAN. It's my Father.

Appendix IV

An extract from a scene from a previous draft of ‘Current Regimes’.

An example of my project of a ‘now and then’ representation of heterosexism through the conflation of space and time in the characters of Fiona and Caroline.

The Association for the Recuperation of Historical Memory

CAZ is wearing a suit, sat on a chair opposite the FIVE WISE MEN. They are waiting. Silence. Eventually FOOF rushes in late. N.B The FIVE WISE MEN's lines should be distributed at the discretion of the performance.

FOOF. *Taking a seat next to CAZ:* Sorry.

CAZ. Sorry. Little nervous. We've never been in front of a governmental committee before.

WISE MAN. In your own time.

CAZ. I'm here because I'd like to adopt.

WISE MAN. That's just lovely. Isn't that just lovely?

WISE MAN. And you?

FOOF. Same.

WISE MAN. Also lovely.

Pause.

WISE MAN. Okay, revenons à nos moutons. Do you own a house?

CAZ. Yes.

WISE MAN. And have you got any, we don't like to use the word, but criteria.
Gender, age, colour, ability?

CAZ. Stanley Scott.

WISE MAN. An international brigade, lovely and precise.

WISE MAN. And you?

FOOF. Same.

WISE MAN. The same?

FOOF. Stanley.

WISE MAN. But that's not possible.

FOOF. Why not?

WISE MAN. Because if all goes to plan for Ms. Robinson, there will be prior request for Mr Scott.

CAZ. No, it's a misunderstanding. We'd like to adopt Stanley, together.

Pause.

WISE MAN. Where are your husbands?

WISE MAN. Are you sisters?

FOOF. No.

WISE MAN. Mother and daughter?

FOOF. No.

WISE MAN. ... Twins.

CAZ. No!

WISE MAN. Then what are you?

FOOF. Obviously we're a loving couple and strong family unit.

Silence.

WISE MAN. It's possible, but it takes longer.

WISE MAN. Hmm. You're already on the files. Can you explain why we know you when we've clearly never met before?

CAZ. That's because we've tried to adopt before.

WISE MAN. And did you?

FOOF. It didn't work out.

WISE MAN. Why did it not work out?

CAZ. -

FOOF. We weren't demonstrating that we were a strong family unit.

WISE MAN. And are you demonstrating that now?

CAZ. Yes.

WISE MAN. What's changed?

CAZ. It's just all come together for us here in Spain.

WISE MAN. It will still take you longer.

CAZ. In Spain?

WISE MAN. As women.

FOOF. Why would it take any longer?

WISE MAN. Specimen A.

A picture of a same-sex couple holding a skeleton between them is shown on a projector. The couple are smiling happily.

WISE MAN. That's his Grandfather the one on the left.

WISE MAN. And you know what they did?

CAZ. Buried him?

WISE MAN. Nope.

- WISE MAN. They've let you down.
- WISE MAN. They let all of us down.
- WISE MAN. We have to be more rigorous.
- WISE MAN. Any effeminate or introvert who insults the movement will be killed like a dog.
- WISE MAN. However, specimen B.
- A picture of a husband and wife, two children and two corpses all smiling is shown on a projector.*
- WISE MAN. This is what we usually look for in one of our unions.
- FOOF. I see.
- WISE MAN. But don't discount yourselves just yet.
- CAZ. We have a legitimate claim.
- FOOF. The Father has his hand on the child's genitals.
- WISE MAN. What?
- FOOF. In your specimen B strong family unit, the Father has his hand on the child's genitals.

They all stare at the picture.

Current Regimes

Lucy Tyler

Characters

FIONA	British.
CAROLINE	British.
OLD WOMAN	Spanish.
OLD MAN	Spanish.
MAN	Spanish.
BEV	British, female.

To be played by the same male actor.

Note

Sometimes, there are unusual line lengths which aid in the delivery of a half beat of breath, which occurs naturally before conjunctions and in the interim between clauses.

Sometimes there are

spaces
to indicate thought,
a silence longer than a beat,
but less than a pause.

Sometimes there are brackets [to indicate the unsaid].

Sometimes there are...

...to indicate another character interrupting...

...the thread of...

... a sentence or thought.

Sometimes things are made doubly apparent by the line running beneath them.

ACT I

Night. Lights on a hotel room. A set of twin beds (made to look like a double bed).

A window. A bathroom door. Wine and glasses. Legs almost straddling the beds, the entire US wall is an imposing photograph of FRANCO. A moment of nothing, then...trailing suitcases, two women enter - FIONA and CAROLINE.

FIONA is 45. Lower middle-class background, highly educated, never lost the

Manchester accent.

CAROLINE is 43. Middle-class, Queen's English speaking femme.

FIONA is too busy with her phone to notice anything. CAROLINE sees FRANCO.

CAROLINE only sees FRANCO.

FIONA. *Looking at phone:* Got no signal.

CAROLINE. -

FIONA. Cannot believe I got no signal.

CAROLINE. -

FIONA. 10 miles from Madrid.

CAROLINE. Kilometres.

FIONA. You and me then.

CAROLINE. And Franco.

FIONA sees FRANCO.

FIONA. Hello!

CAROLINE. I know.

FIONA. Fine nose.

CAROLINE. I'll never come lying under that.

FIONA. See all the way up. Nostrils into brain.

FIONA puts her suitcase on the bed, starts unpacking, spreading out clothes.

CAROLINE. Nobody wants to fuck under dictators' noses. It's...

FIONA. Iconic. Bit of kitsch. Seen my charger?

CAROLINE. Kitsch??

FIONA. Heritage.

CAROLINE. Francisco Franco Francisco Franco Francisco Franco the whole way out of Madrid. *Pointing to FRANCO:* Now that?

FIONA. *Changing into pyjamas:* Cheap and random hotel. Not random chosen. Chose it because it was cheap, didn't I? Knackered. It's only for two weeks.

CAROLINE. Two weeks under Franco? I won't wear my bikini now. Jesus.

FIONA. Jesus, your phone. Please.

CAROLINE. Is it tradition?

FIONA. Still in prayers isn't he? And books and schools and plaques and signs and statues isn't he? Why not bedrooms? It's art. Meaningless art. I like it.

CAROLINE. *Passing phone:* What about Picasso. Miró. Gris. Dali? Don't you like...

FIONA sees CAROLINE's phone also has no signal. She throws it on the bed, roams around the room, waving her own phone for signal.

FIONA. *Pointing out bottle:* Like that.

CAROLINE. What about their...

FIONA. *Proffering bottle:* Taste?

CAROLINE. Exactly. Their taste.

FIONA. No cork screw.

CAROLINE. *Pointing to FRANCO:* There's your sympathy.

FIONA. It's for the tourists.

CAROLINE. We're tourists. Trying to have a holiday.

FIONA. *Dismantling phone.* Need to speak...

CAROLINE. To sleep under Franco would be entirely hypocritical.

FIONA looks up, sees that CAROLINE has packed everything back into their suitcases.

FIONA walks over to the suitcases. She unpacks the clothes, this time stowing them more permanently in drawers rather than on the bed.

FIONA. Learn to put up with things.

CAROLINE. It's a theme park!

FIONA. Somewhere to rest our heads.

CAROLINE. In between a dictator's legs?

FIONA. They're poor, the owners.

CAROLINE. Heathens.

FIONA. *Looking at phone:* Bringing up their small grandchild here. An old woman and man. Juggling things. I'm not militant.

CAROLINE. Or even mildly principled.

FIONA. You can do what you do to that nude. *Beat.* What you do to that nude. That nude you've got. When every time mum comes round, you put a tea towel over it.

CAROLINE. It's not the same at all.

FIONA. It's what mum would call distasteful, your nude. This is what you call distasteful.

CAROLINE. It's distasteful to refresh the paint but not change the colour.
And it's distasteful to whitewash over blood,
and it's distasteful to wallpaper a wall which men were shot
against, but not tear it down.

FIONA. *Checking her phone:* You think I'm...

CAROLINE. Apathetic?

FIONA. Three bars now. Signal's floating in and out.

CAROLINE. I'm just surprised you're not fighting.

FIONA silently brings out a sarong. She stands on the bed and drapes it over FRANCO. The sarong has a picture of Che Guevara on it.

FIONA. There. Can't even see his outline.

CAROLINE. *Touching her face:* You can see mine. Look at these lines.

FIONA. You're only 43.

CAROLINE. I should be fighting.

FIONA. Not your battle.

FIONA returns to the wine and tries to open it without a cork screw.

CAROLINE. We don't want blood on our hands. I'm going to ring down and say something. I'm going to complain.

FIONA. *Prizing cork out of the bottle:* Don't complain!

CAROLINE. *Looking at a phrasebook:* I can and I will. It's despicable.
In Spanish: It's despicable.
You promised me a...

FIONA. *Pouring herself a glass of wine:* Right wing megalomaniac?

CAROLINE. Raunchy marathon. Long-awaited sex. Well, frankly, Franco doesn't do it for me.

FIONA. You drank that Mussolini wine in Italy. Want some of this?

CAROLINE. That was unavoidable.

FIONA. Anti-constitutional, you said.

CAROLINE. It wasn't my constitution! Yes. I do want some.

FIONA pours CAROLINE a glass of wine. She hands it to her.

FIONA. Happy Anniversary.

CAROLINE. Is it?

They swig a mouthful of wine each.

FIONA. I know you. You'll go home and say to friends 'the room would have been so generic without him'.

CAROLINE. He murdered thousands of people!

Silence. CAROLINE downs her glass and tops it up immediately.

FIONA. I thought it was some sort of Grotto.

CAROLINE. Grotto?

FIONA. Nook.

CAROLINE. Nook?

FIONA. When I booked it, on the internet, there were photos of the rooms, but I could only see the stone-work, the pebble dash there.
(Touches the wall behind FRANCO).

CAROLINE. The backdrop.

FIONA. Thought it was real stonework, stone-face, the rooms built into some kind of rock-face! *Beat*. Feels like home to me. What's this?
(Of wine)

CAROLINE. Complicity. And I want an explanation. You're going to have to make a stand with me. A united front.

FIONA. *Busy with phone*: But it's not united...on this front.

Silence. Exasperated, CAROLINE looks out of the window.

CAROLINE. And we're fucking eclipsed!

FIONA. Thought you'd never notice.

CAROLINE. It's...

FIONA. *Reading from phrasebook:* The world's most hated fascist monument. The Valley of the Fallen. Stunning, I know.

CAROLINE. We're almost on top of it!

FIONA. Look at the cross on the hill. It's an enormous...

CAROLINE. Phallus!

FIONA. *Reading from phrasebook:* Mausoleum.

CAROLINE. It's Franco's graveyard, isn't it?

FIONA. According to my research, thousands of soldiers rest there, not just Franco.

CAROLINE. *Pause.* Why are we here?

FIONA. Look at the marble and the walls. That dusty sunset. It's an artefact, a huge archive and museum. And for an educated woman brimming with intellectual curiosity such as myself, it's a place of

wonder and you know, photo opportunities. I thought we could stroll there tomorrow morning.

CAROLINE. Spanish politicians refuse to set foot there!

FIONA. Oh come on! We're not Spanish politicians. And you've been to Auschwitz.

CAROLINE. *Facing FRANCO:* There's no comparison.
And I can still see his bollocks!!!

FIONA. Okay. Okay. You want me to go and say something?

CAROLINE. Yes. I do.

FIONA. Fine. I'll get dressed.

CAROLINE. Thank-you. Thank-you.

FIONA. Franco. Franco. Franco.

FIONA goes into the bathroom with a change of clothes. Alone, CAROLINE removes the sarong from FRANCO. FRANCO looks at CAROLINE. CAROLINE looks at FRANCO.

CAROLINE spits at FRANCO. CAROLINE regrets it, and with a tissue, wipes spit off the picture and re-hangs the sarong. She lights a cigarette and stares at Che. Then...

FIONA is standing in the bathroom doorway, wearing a strap-on penis over lingerie. She's in the mood.

CAROLINE. *Eventually:* You can't go down like that!

FIONA. We're here and we're going to enjoy this. I'm gonna make you enjoy this. Lie down missy. Lie down and forget everything.

CAROLINE. Then don't fuck me with your arm outstretched [like a fascist]!
Does a fascist salute.

FIONA. The phones don't work. The fascists are out. Think of it as our act of retaliation.

CAROLINE. I'll give you an act of retaliation!!

CAROLINE's phone rings. It's unexpected.

Answering phone: Hello? Oh hi!

FIONA. Who is it?

FIONA tries to listen in. CAROLINE won't let her.

CAROLINE. *On phone:* Very well thanks.

No, the line's...

No my fault. It's. We're in Spain. SPAIN.

No, it's not regular.

FIONA. Say it's once in a lifetime! Say it's once in a lifetime!

CAROLINE. *On Phone:*

Did Fiona not tell you?

Mouths: Fuuuuccckkk.

I'm sorry. I'm so. I'll sort it. Yes. I promise. No, I promise.

Silence.

Could you clarify 'demonstrate'?

Oh. I'm sure you'll find the division of...

Can we talk about this at our next meeting?

What?!?

FIONA. Let me talk to her. Let me talk to her!

CAROLINE. *Oh phone:* Bev, I'm so...no!

I see. Thank-you for informing me.

Mouths: Fuuucccckkk.

I'll. Okay. Thank-you very...Bye then. *Hangs up.*

FIONA. You have signal.

CAROLINE. Signal's all I have.

Pause. CAROLINE lights a cigarette. She turns away from FIONA.

Bev was reminding me I hadn't dropped in my doctor's note.

My smoking cessation certificate.

FIONA. You idiot.

CAROLINE. You didn't tell her we were going away.

FIONA. -

CAROLINE. You forgot to tell our adoption supervisor we were going on
holiday.

FIONA. *Struggling to remove her strap on:* Shit.

CAROLINE. Adoptions aren't immaculate conceptions Fiona.

- FIONA. Call it human error.
- CAROLINE. We're going to miss our appointment now. What's the Trust going to think of us? Letting down a child!
- FIONA. Everybody needs a holiday.
- CAROLINE. How can we demonstrate our potential to be 'a strong family unit' if we're on holiday?
- FIONA. Demonstrate what?
- CAROLINE. That's what we had to do at our meeting. The one we're going to miss. Demonstrate we're a strong family unit. As mothers. As two mothers. Get it? You...you...
- FIONA. You. You. You.
- CAROLINE. We had to quantify our division of labours, responsibilities, our role model potential and our ability to remove any...
- FIONA. Remove the gender disadvantage we have in our home. I know. Yes thank-you. We don't have a father figure. I do know.

CAROLINE. There's your father figure (*of FRANCO*).
Pause. We're already at a disadvantage and then you do this.

FIONA. I've apologised.

CAROLINE. You lied. You told me you'd spoken to Bev. *Pause.* God I'm too old for this.

FIONA. No you're not.

CAROLINE. I'm old. I've had my menopause.

FIONA. -

CAROLINE. Exactly. And the adoption's my last chance.

FIONA. We'll go home and there'll be a baby on the door-step.

CAROLINE. You don't realise how damning your behaviour is, do you?
Give me a break. Give me a family.

FIONA. Get in touch with your parents.

CAROLINE. You know what I mean by family!

FIONA. We are and we'll prove it. I'll prove it. I'll step up.

We'll have a baby. We'll make a baby right now. Baby?

FIONA touches CAROLINE. It's sexual.

CAROLINE. Fuck off.

FIONA. Foul-mouthing me?

CAROLINE. You're in denial that it's warranted. But it is warranted! Fuck off.

FIONA. Come on.

CAROLINE. Get off me.

FIONA. I'll get the dong.

CAROLINE. Get off me!

FIONA. *Throwing herself onto the bed:* Oh come...

As FIONA throws herself down, the beds suddenly skid apart. She falls through the crack in between them and screams.

CAROLINE. *Completely stripping the beds.* It's twin beds. Look. Twin beds.

FIONA. Thanks, I'm fine.

CAROLINE. Supposed to look like a double bed but it isn't.

FIONA. Twin beds. So?

CAROLINE. Two single beds. Twin beds.

FIONA. So?

CAROLINE. Bastards!! We're not twins!

FIONA. S'alright.

CAROLINE. Why's it alright?

FIONA. It's a mistake or tradition.

CAROLINE. TWO mattresses?

The room is in total chaos. The floor is covered with clothes, sheets and blankets.

I booked a double. I wanted a double.

FIONA. I know.

CAROLINE. I know you know. You want one too.

FIONA. We don't know what standard practice is.

CAROLINE. In a right wing hotel?

FIONA. Be reasonable!

CAROLINE. You know what's happened.

FIONA. *Pouring wine. Drinking wine:* It's not personal.

CAROLINE. How are we supposed to make a baby if we're not in the same bed?

FIONA. It's not possible. Anyway, we've got two single beds at home! It makes a much bigger bed.

CAROLINE. They didn't want us to have a double bed. They wanted us to think they were okay with it. But really they're not okay with it. They're not okay with any of this.

FIONA. They can think what they like, if that's what they think.

CAROLINE. No they can't.

FIONA. You know they can.

CAROLINE. No they can't. It's illegal.

CAROLINE and FIONA sit on their respective single beds. Silence.

FIONA. It's not illegal. Happens every day.

CAROLINE. It's attitudes like yours that make this okay.

FIONA. I'm not condoning anything.

CAROLINE. You are.

FIONA. I'm not condoning.

CAROLINE. You are.

FIONA. I'm not condoning, I'm bypassing.

CAROLINE. Well, well, well.

FIONA. They just saw two women.

CAROLINE. A strong family unit of two women?

FIONA. By and large two women want separate beds.

CAROLINE. Well we don't. And we're here for two weeks. Celibate.

FIONA. It's his fault (*of FRANCO*). Blame him if you want.

CAROLINE. I'm going to complain.

FIONA. *Stripping sarong off FRANCO to wear herself:* No you are not.

CAROLINE. Bev, Franco, the adoption. Twin beds!! I'm going to complain.

Pause. Don't look at me like that. Don't look at me like that.

Answer me this: are we sisters?

FIONA. Let's go to bed.

CAROLINE. Mother and daughter?

FIONA. -

CAROLINE. Twins in our twin beds?

FIONA. -

CAROLINE. Where's the wine, let's toast him now. Let's toast him now!

Both gulp back a glass of wine.

FIONA. Don't go mouthing off. Don't say anything.

CAROLINE. I'm going to say everything! I'm protecting our human rights!

FIONA. *Scoffs.*

CAROLINE. I have to defend us and our future child from a world like this.

FIONA. This is so typical. You do this every time. A man gives you a funny look. You complain.

- CAROLINE. Speak for yourself.
- FIONA. A kid asks why we were holding hands. You complain.
- CAROLINE. Bad parenting. When we raise ours...
- FIONA. A telephone salesPERSON comments on your Ms...ness. You complain.
- CAROLINE. That's perverse.
- FIONA. A policeman repeatedly inviting you to the Transgendered and Transsexual society you complain.
- CAROLINE. *Beat.* Bastard.
- FIONA. No, I retract the last one. He was a twat. *Pushing the beds back together:* Let's push them together. Give me a kiss.
- CAROLINE. I can't.
- FIONA. Baby, give me a kiss.
- CAROLINE. I can't.

FIONA. Give me a kissy wissy.

CAROLINE. *Shakes her head.*

FIONA. Then give me one when you start collecting your pension.

CAROLINE. What?

FIONA. The good gay guide says you get a monthly pension here if you're a gay imprisoned and tortured under him (*Of FRANCO*).

CAROLINE. We're being tortured.

FIONA. This isn't torture.

CAROLINE. *Ipsso facto fucking torture. Can't you hear the fascist footsteps?*

FIONA. *Putting on the clothes she arrived in:* It's the chilly evening breeze.

CAROLINE. I've told you what I think. You're...

FIONA. A knob, probably.

CAROLINE. A knob condoning this danger. This oppression.

Pause. It's all such a bombardment. I'm opening the Sherry.

FIONA. Not the Sherry!

CAROLINE. *Opening another bottle of Sherry:* I know it's for your parents.

But screw your parents.

FIONA. Souvenirs are what families do.

CAROLINE. *Pouring Sherry:* From Rome, they bought me a Cardinal Ratzinger baseball cap. A baseball cap?! Me?!

FIONA. A comedy gesture.

CAROLINE. *Surveying the room:* We should call the embassy.

FIONA. Drunk?

CAROLINE. Becoming drunker.

FIONA. We need to deal with this our way.

CAROLINE. And what's our way?

FIONA. The apathetic way.

CAROLINE. *Throws her glass at Franco. It smashes.*

FIONA. That was inherited crystal!

Silence. FIONA clears up the smashed glass.

CAROLINE. There isn't a moon tonight.

FIONA. There's shards everywhere. The adoption's not going anywhere.

CAROLINE. We shouldn't have gone anywhere.

Pause.

And to here?! Especially here. Why here?

FIONA. *Pouring CAROLINE another Sherry:*

Everyone goes to Spain for their holidays.

CAROLINE. Don't tell me this is a holiday.

FIONA. *Beat.* Fine. I won't. *Beat.* Because it isn't. There. I've said it. It isn't.

This isn't actually a holiday. Fuck it Caroline. If you want the truth,
this isn't actually a hotel.

CAROLINE. *Pause.* What is it??

Silence. Suddenly, OLD WOMAN enters, carrying a suitcase.

OLD WOMAN. It is a hotel. I know this because I am the proprietor,
 alongside my husband.

But this place is also a cemetery.

Am I too early?

FIONA. No.

CAROLINE. Expecting company?

FIONA. Just about to mention.

CAROLINE. Mention it!

OLD WOMAN. We're pen pals.

FIONA. Sounds worse than it is.

CAROLINE. Never told me you were expecting [company].

OLD WOMAN. Si. Myself and also Francisco, my small Grandson. You'll like him.

He's a child.

CAROLINE. *Pause.* Is this about the adoption?

FIONA. No!

OLD WOMAN. Si.

CAROLINE. What have you said about me?

FIONA. I...

OLD WOMAN. *Sitting down:* Ssshhh. It's family time at the cemetery.

A time where we sit down and think about family,
a time where we weigh up what's missing from family.

Unclasping her suitcase: This is Fiona's gesture to you.

CAROLINE. You've gestured to me?

FIONA. I was going to tell you.

OLD WOMAN. That if a family desire a history so violently, so wholeheartedly in
order to put to bed the guilt, the torment, the shame of not burying
the dead or not being able to have... what's the word? A family, then...

From her suitcase, OLD WOMAN empties a myriad of documents, old photos, lists, letters and all manner of sepia relating to the Spanish Civil War onto the bed.

They come to me. This is why Fiona has come to me
at my new online address.

CAROLINE. You...came to her?

OLD WOMAN. Si.

CAROLINE. For what?

FIONA. *To OLD WOMAN:* Have you got him?

OLD WOMAN. *Rummaging in her papers:* Where did I put him?

CAROLINE. Him?

OLD WOMAN. I take cheques as well as cash and credit. For boys.
And their documents.

CAROLINE. You sell boys?

OLD WOMAN. *Proffering old photographs of soldiers:* You like boys?

FIONA. Of course not.

OLD WOMAN. Boys which are dead?

FIONA. *To OLD WOMAN:* You know what we want.

CAROLINE. What do we want???

OLD WOMAN. *Searching in here documents:* I know I had them a moment ago.

Shouting: Francisco! Come and help your Grandmother!

In the interim how about a photo of a black man in Republican uniform for 50 Euros?

FIONA. *To OLD WOMAN:* I asked for one very specific person.

You said you had him.

OLD WOMAN. *Searching:* I do!

FIONA. Or shall I go to the authorities?

CAROLINE. Authorities? What have you done?

OLD WOMAN. *Suddenly stops searching:* Don't go to the authorities. The authorities are corrupt. One instance which proves this is the history of an old woman. She'd allowed the walls of her house to fester and crack and

all because her husband died and she failed to upkeep her property alone. And the walls rotted, and plants grew out of them, and vines wrapped around her ankles. When the courts found out, they reminded the old woman that her house was registered as a famous political meeting place, therefore valuable to the heritage of the town. But the woman paid no heed, and she was charged accordingly, and told to pay a hefty fine, which of course she couldn't pay. The upshot of it all, was that she died in prison. And the house was saved from rotting. The End.

But only one week later, the house was hit by a lorry delivering Coca Cola for the local children! A side of the house was completely lost. The courts paid for the other side to be removed. And the house is there no longer! Is a Hungarian restaurant now.

OLD WOMAN laughs uncontrollably until she notices CAROLINE and FIONA staring at her.

She picks up a document arbitrarily and hands it to CAROLINE.

For you.

CAROLINE. What is it?

OLD WOMAN. Stanley Scott.

CAROLINE. What?

OLD WOMAN. Regiment drafting instructions for International Brigadier
Stanley Scott.

FIONA. Like Caroline Scott.

OLD WOMAN. *Reading:* Durham born 1911.

FIONA. Signed up to the army 1930. War broke out 39.

OLD WOMAN. 36.

FIONA. 39.

OLD WOMAN. 36.

FIONA. Whatever. But Stanley signed up. Number 1878. Shipped off
to Madrid he was. The Spanish Civil War. And into the siege.

OLD WOMAN. The siege of Madrid.

FIONA. Where's the other documents?

OLD WOMAN. Where's Francisco?

CAROLINE. Who's Stanley?

Pause.

FIONA. Not heard of Stanley?

CAROLINE. Never.

Pause.

OLD WOMAN. Caroline Scott, in order to find you the father figure which you lack, the manly aura for your adoption...

FIONA. I never said that.

OLD WOMAN. You emailed it.

FIONA. What Bev asked for.

OLD WOMAN. Fiona has brought you to Spain, because it is in Spain that she is going to find Stanley Scott for you, a father figure, your own Grandfather, who fought and died in our Civil War.

Silence.

CAROLINE. My Grandfather?

FIONA. Thrilled?

CAROLINE. I didn't know I had a Grandfather.

FIONA. Doubly thrilled?

CAROLINE. No!!!!

OLD WOMAN. No?

FIONA. Oh.

CAROLINE. Who'd choose their Grandfather over their child?

FIONA. There isn't a choice to make.

CAROLINE. You've already made it! You're...

FIONA. A knob. Yes. You said earlier.

OLD WOMAN. Not in front of the child.

CAROLINE. What child?

FIONA. Exactly. No children! No family! Not yet. Unless we find Stanley.

I thought you'd be happy.

CAROLINE. *Holding phone:* And let the adoption blow up in our faces?

FIONA. Nothing's going to blow up.

CAROLINE holds her phone at arm length into FIONA's face like a grenade.

She holds this position...

CAROLINE. It's going to blow up in your face.

...until the phone starts to ring.

Answering phone: Bev!

OLD WOMAN becomes BEV.

BEV. You've left me no choice, Caroline.

CAROLINE. No! I mean, surely there's a policy which grants...

BEV. I'm cancelling your application.

CAROLINE. *Beat.* No. I know we're away and...

BEV. Under circumstances where the prospective parents prove no longer interested, say if the prospective parents take off, leave the country without notice, for an undisclosed period for instance, the adoption itself becomes void. We had a child sitting here. Francisco? A child which you missed seeing. You disappointed him. Made him cry. Made him cry hard.

CAROLINE. Oh no, please no.

BEV. Moreover, if a couple can't demonstrate their ability to remove a gender disadvantage and, I don't like to say this but...
Examining FIONA's strap-on which she was sat on:

... simulate a masculine presence,

then that makes my job very difficult indeed. Especially when said couple cannot even be present to fight their corner.

CAROLINE. *Pause.* I'll do anything.

FIONA. Tell her about Stanley! What we're doing about Stanley!

CAROLINE turns away from FIONA.

CAROLINE. I'll do anything.

BEV. Of course, if you chose to return home immediately. Say, be in my office for nine tomorrow morning, then plausibly we could continue. There might even be someone we could introduce you to.

CAROLINE. I think I understand. I totally understand. *Hangs up.*

Silence. BEV becomes OLD WOMAN again.

OLD WOMAN. It's always difficult when that happens.

FIONA. Why does my phone never ring?

CAROLINE. We have to leave. We have to get on a flight and we have to leave.

FIONA. If you'd have just told her about Stanley.

CAROLINE. We have to leave!

OLD WOMAN. *With hand down her top:* But you haven't seen what's between my breasts. I've remembered where I've put your desires made flesh.

OLD WOMAN pulls out a document from her top. She hands it to Fiona.

Thank-you for emailing ahead.

FIONA. *Reading document:* International Brigadiers. Here we go.

Stanley, Stanley, Stanley.

CAROLINE. Where are the suitcases?

Ignored, CAROLINE starts running round, collecting clothes.

FIONA. Nothing's alphabetical.

OLD WOMAN. That's because the remnants of these men are painful.

Even on paper they are painful, better just to cram them into files
of over a kilometre and hope nobody need examine them again.

FIONA. Davies, Davison, Regan, Vernon, Worth, Gosling, Willis, Bennett,
James, Childs, Tudor, but no Scott.

OLD WOMAN. *Placing her hand down her top:* No Scott? It must be down here
somewhere.

CAROLINE. Fiona, did you not hear what Bev said?

Finding nothing, OLD WOMAN starts rummaging around in the papers on the bed.

FIONA joins her.

OLD WOMAN. *Holding a document:* What about this?

CAROLINE. Fiona.

OLD WOMAN. Republicans who fought in the Battle of Madrid.

FIONA. *Reading: Gonzales, Castro, Torres, Flores, Diaz, Crus, Ramos, Lott?*

It's a Stanley Lott! *Reading: Lott. Not Scott but almost.*

Referenced in another list, a battalion list based at... yes!!!

San Escorial.

CAROLINE. Don't make me give you an ultimatum.

FIONA. *Pause. Have you got anything about San Escorial?*

OLD WOMAN and FIONA recommence searching. CAROLINE grabs a document from FIONA.

She sets it alight with her lighter.

No!

OLD WOMAN. Stanley Scott, a cipher, blown away by the dust of other men.

OLD WOMAN catches the paper and blows on it.

FIONA. Cutting your nose off.

OLD WOMAN. You'll have to pay.

CAROLINE. We're leaving anyway. There's a child waiting.

OLD WOMAN. Francisco's a child and his arrival is imminent.

FIONA. There you go.

CAROLINE. Going to pack. Going to leave. Going to do it on my own.

FIONA. Leaving me?

CAROLINE. My own child. Waiting.

FIONA. You wait a minute.

CAROLINE. Crying she said. God. God. Oh God. Need to get to Moncloa station.

FIONA. No you don't.

CAROLINE. Need to call a cab.

FIONA. You don't.

CAROLINE. *Making for the door:* Need to get a flight, any flight
and adopt this child on my own.

OLD WOMAN becomes BEV. She stops CAROLINE at the door.

BEV. *To CAROLINE:* It would be ridiculous to presume Caroline,
that an application wouldn't be damaged by the fact
you've been through the system once, and unsuccessfully.
It doesn't bode well for your prospects. Ever.

Silence. BEV becomes OLD WOMAN.

OLD WOMAN. I said it's difficult when that happens.

FIONA. Couldn't do it without me.

CAROLINE. *Pause.* I know.

OLD WOMAN returns to quietly searching through her papers on the bed. FIONA gradually envelops CAROLINE.

FIONA. Caroline, it's for your own good.

CAROLINE. I'm begging you.

FIONA. *Pause.* Okay. Okay. We'll leave. If that's what you want. Fine.
Go home tonight. Get on a flight.

CAROLINE. Together?

FIONA. Yeh. So sit here for a moment and be amazed.

OLD WOMAN. *Thrusting a photo between CAROLINE and FIONA:*

Be amazed. For the right price, a soldier from Battalion San Escorial.

FIONA. *Examining photo:* Bingo. I'll pay.

CAROLINE. *Taking picture:* He doesn't even look like me!

FIONA. Trust me.

OLD WOMAN. So, all in all, including damages...

Five hundred Euros.

FIONA. Three hundred Euros.

CAROLINE. Out of your mind.

FIONA. Deal?

OLD WOMAN. Done.

FIONA takes out an enormous wedge of Euros. She hands three hundred Euros to OLD WOMAN.

CAROLINE. Where did you get that??

FIONA. It's my pension as a gay tortured under Franco.

OLD WOMAN. *Collecting her things:* Tortured under Franco? My father, who was also tortured, was killed and buried just a few millimetres from the stone monument erected in the park of a famous poet. Or was he the famous poet? He was the poet.

Making to leave: What's more important, is that we started digging next to an olive tree, which was useful, because at the same time we started digging, I started running out of oil!

Handing CAROLINE a bone: A little something to help you remember my services and call on me again. Goodbye!

OLD WOMAN exits. Silence. CAROLINE examines the bone.

FIONA. Let me explain all of this to you properly.

CAROLINE. *Proffering bone:* It's a bone. It's a bone!

FIONA. Fuckity fuck fuck fuck a duck, it's a bone.

CAROLINE. I'm not sure what type of bone, but it's a bone.

FIONA. It's not...shoulder. Is it? No. It's you know, it has to be more round for a shoulder.

Silence.

CAROLINE. It's...well...it's a...bone.

FIONA. Hip?

CAROLINE. It's...

FIONA. Pelvis.

CAROLINE. Somebody's pelvis.

FIONA turns around, notices that the beds are slightly apart. She pushes them further apart.

In doing so, she opens up the split to reveal an open grave.

CAROLINE. A grave.

FIONA shakes her head. CAROLINE commences digging in between the beds. Eventually, CAROLINE pulls out another bone. Then another. Then another. She gives them to FIONA.

FIONA. Fuck. Fuck. Fuckfuckfuck.

CAROLINE keeps passing bones to FIONA. When FIONA has too many to hold, she puts them on the floor. When CAROLINE has retrieved all the available bones, she returns from the grave. The women survey their pile. CAROLINE starts ordering and sorting the bones on the bed. Gradually, she jigsaws an entire human skeleton. FIONA can only watch. CAROLINE returns to the mass grave, and not without effort, pulls out a skull. She reunites it with the skeleton.

It's a man.

CAROLINE. Might be a woman.

A long silence.

Do you think, do you, do you think this is us a few years ago?
A couple who stayed at the hotel and...

FIONA. If it is, there's only one of us.

CAROLINE. Then...

FIONA. Don't!

Again, CAROLINE climbs into the mass grave, this time, until she is unseen. Nothing for a moment, then...

CAROLINE. Grab my hand. Grab my hand. Grab my hand.

FIONA puts her hand out for CAROLINE. Instead she receives the hand of a skeleton. She screams.

Pull me out. Pull me out. Pull me out.

FIONA pulls out the bones of another skeleton from the open grave. As quickly as possible, she lays out the skeleton on the bed, eventually returning to the grave to help CAROLINE out. Exhausted, they sit together in front of the beds.

CAROLINE. Get your phone.

FIONA. Got no signal.

CAROLINE. Get my phone

FIONA. No signal either.

CAROLINE. How do you know?

FIONA. You never did.

Act II

FIONA and CAROLINE are sat as before, in front of the beds (which have been pushed together). Lying on the beds are the two skeletons and between them, OLD MAN, asleep.

FIONA. Need a drink.

CAROLINE. If you loved me, we'd leave now.

FIONA downs a Sherry, pours another and one for CAROLINE.

FIONA. Love. Love is a series of gestures beginning with...

CAROLINE. *Bringing out suitcase:* Ending now.

FIONA. *Pause.* Pack neatly. Fold without creasing.

CAROLINE. *Sorting clothes:* We have an appointment in just over ten hours.

FIONA sips her Sherry. She laughs.

FIONA. She never called you. *Checking phone:* You've got as little signal as I have. Hi Bev. Bye Bev. You haven't spoken to her!

CAROLINE. *Pause.* This whole thing is a farce. All of it.
And by the way, single women, statistically, are more successful with adoptions than lesbian couples.

FIONA. Do what you like.

CAROLINE. You paid out for an old photo of a man! Any man, don't know, don't care. Give me a man!

FIONA. Euros.

CAROLINE. What?

FIONA. Euros, not pounds.

CAROLINE. Hard earnt money.

FIONA. Spent on you, for you.

As CAROLINE continues packing, she finds the enormous bundle of notes from which FIONA paid OLD WOMAN.

CAROLINE. *Holding notes:* Is this from our savings?

FIONA. *Pause.* I, I, I might have paid a few visits to your Mum and Dad.

Pause. CAROLINE is floored. She puts the money down.

Just a couple of times. Okay. Every week. Been going for tea every week. *Pause.* Don't look like that. It's been twenty years too long. Even they think so.

CAROLINE. -

FIONA. Your Dad's skeletal now.

CAROLINE. *Beat.* You never thought to [say]?

FIONA. Part of the surprise. *Beat.* How else did you think I'd found out about Stanley?

CAROLINE. Did he give you that money?

FIONA. Come round to us being together. To you being...

CAROLINE. I'm not, I mean, you had no right.

FIONA. I made vows for that privilege.

Silence. CAROLINE starts packing again.

CAROLINE. A nameless Spanish Republican Soldier? Three hundred Euros?

FIONA. *Forcing photo under CAROLINE's nose:* Look at the band on his arm.

CAROLINE. Bev said...

FIONA. Nothing. Look at the soldier.

CAROLINE. *Continuing packing.*

FIONA. See the number he's wearing? 1877? Stanley's number was 1878!

Pause. This is someone who stared into the abyss with your
Grandfather. Who perhaps...

CAROLINE. Watched my Grandfather die? I don't even know this man's name.

OLD MAN. *Still lying flat on his back:* José.

Shocked, FIONA and CAROLINE turn around.

His name is José. The picture of the man that you have in your hand is
a picture of José. Captain José Morales. That is his name.

Pause. CAROLINE and FIONA stare at OLD MAN. Eventually, he sits up.

Si! It's true, married couples look more alike each day.

My wife, who you met before, and myself, we built this hotel
right on top of the mass grave of San Escorial.

And I am eternally grateful to you, although it may not look it
because of my narcolepsy, but I am eternally grateful to you,
for finding me my father.

Pointing to the skeletons: My father and another. You've just dug
them out of a trough the size of a council swimming pool between
your beds. Now I'm well rested, I must carry both to our family
shrine.

OLD MAN tries to lift up a skeleton. He can't. Breathless, he sits back down.

FIONA. Morales?

OLD MAN. Sherry, did you say?

FIONA. *Pause. Pours OLD MAN a Sherry and hands it to him.*

OLD MAN. Gracias.

CAROLINE. On another note, I just wanted to let you know, we've actually decided to check out tonight.

OLD MAN. *Drinking Sherry:* You're booked in for two weeks! It must be the quickest exhumation in history. For me, it has been years. But thanks to you, the wait is finally ceased.

FIONA. Our...pleasure.

CAROLINE scoffs. She returns to packing her things.

OLD MAN. You see, they tracked my father's movements to this area. Using technology. They tracked, but not only did they track, they took DNA from my arm. And then you found me my father!

FIONA. Incredible. *Beat.* We're looking for her Grandfather, Stanley Scott, an International Brigadier based here.

OLD MAN. I know the name well. Stanley Scott was close in keeping with José Morales [the man in your photo].

FIONA Hear that?

OLD MAN. José is in this village.

FIONA. *Running to the window:* Where's his grave?

OLD MAN. He's twice my age and sits in a chair twice the age of himself.

FIONA. He's still alive?

OLD MAN. *Heaving skeleton onto his back:* As much as anyone.

FIONA. You have to talk to Morales, Caroline. Caroline!

CAROLINE looks up from her packing.

OLD MAN. Don't mind me.

OLD MAN drops the skeleton.

FIONA. You have to check Morales out.

CAROLINE. Stay the night? We're not.

OLD MAN attempts again; he gathers as much of the fragmented skeleton in his arms as possible.

FIONA. Get up at four, buy tickets, continental breakfast, flight. No prob.

CAROLINE. On your life.

OLD MAN. Do you have a suitcase I could borrow? For the [skeletons]?

CAROLINE. Sorry, we're leaving.

FIONA. It's his Dad Caroline.

Pause.

CAROLINE. *Throwing the suitcase at OLD MAN:* Fine!

OLD MAN. In memory of him. Amen.

Whilst the CAROLINE and FIONA are saying the below, OLD MAN fills the suitcase with the fragmented skeletons. He then places the bags outside the bedroom door (the 'off-stage' corridor of the hotel).

FIONA. So we're staying?

CAROLINE. Only if you do what you said you were going to.

FIONA. I've done it.

CAROLINE. No.

FIONA. Then what?

CAROLINE. Complain about Franco.

FIONA. You what?

CAROLINE. Complain about Franco. Get her to take it down.

FIONA. *Beat.* After all this?

CAROLINE. On the ideological grounds we discussed earlier.

FIONA. *Pause.* There's a grave between the beds and you want me to complain about a Franco? A picture?

CAROLINE. Go on. Go.

FIONA. Don't be silly.

CAROLINE. Say that to the thousands of victims of Franco and his legacy.

FIONA. Say it to him, the man of the house.

OLD MAN. *Laughing:* Décor has little to do with me. Taste has less to do with my wife.

CAROLINE. So go and ask her, go on. Tell her to come and take it down.

Pause.

FIONA. Really?

CAROLINE. If Franco stays [I won't]!

FIONA. Alright! Alright. See you in a minute.

To OLD MAN: Erm, thanks.

OLD MAN waves. FIONA exits. Alone, OLD MAN and CAROLINE blink at each other.

OLD MAN becomes MAN.

MAN. In the war, and maybe before, when people have died and we must bury them, we say to ourselves 'we are not burying bodies, we are planting seeds'. *Pause.* I have been reborn. I am José Morales, your picture postcard idol.

CAROLINE. *Looks at photo, then at MAN. Shows MAN photo:* You're too young, too...not this José Morales.

MAN. I don't take a siesta.

CAROLINE. I'm sorry?

MAN. I don't take a siesta. My way of saying you don't look local.

CAROLINE. So José's asleep?

MAN. Everyone is. Under desks. On the floors. Underground. *Beat*. In Bed.

20 minutes is regarded as best medically, anatomically.

Though climate and culture say otherwise. I'm the only one
for kilometres. The only one awake. *Pause*.

The point is that José fell asleep last night and never woke up.

CAROLINE. He's dead?

MAN. My grandfather José is dead. Si. And I'm in mourning. Looking at
birds and illustrating stories for comic books. And don't tell me.
You're a doctor and you're informing me about a genealogical
condition I've inherited from José.

CAROLINE. *Laughs*. No. I just wanted to ask him what he remembered.

MAN. What a shame he's dead. So the question now is this: what do you
want in a wider sense? This is what I ask of my characters in the

comic book. I say ‘what do you want characters, in the sense which might be humanely impossible to achieve, but you still desire it?’

CAROLINE. Oh, I couldn’t tell you that.

MAN. You can tell me anything.

CAROLINE. I’m in the middle of an adoption process.

MAN. Do you read comic books? My comic’s Madrid based. I only ask because mostly, I write queer characters on quests, see, in sticky scenarios, near death experiences, and enlightening ones. Your predicament would be a perfect model for me.

CAROLINE. Predicament?

MAN. That you’re in Spain, not at home adopting the child you think you’re adopting. Tick tock. Tick tock. The child is grown up now, perhaps he’s a man, perhaps, he’s me. *Pause*. But I’m a comic book illustrator, from Madrid. And I should study you as a muse. Stand naked on a plinth and I’ll draw you with your legs astride a united Spain and Catalonia. What? I thought you respected a desire to dismantle, maybe even erase (*points to FRANCO:*) old social values through art. *Pause*. I almost always say the opposite to what I mean. It’s true, my greatest desire *is* to erase old social values, all except one, family. I

treasure and protect family. I'm a father figure, all fathers mean the world to me. My Grandfather meant the world to me.

CAROLINE. My Grandfather served with your Grandfather. Stanley Scott.
You've heard the name?

MAN. *Walking to the window:* Have you seen much of the countryside around here?

CAROLINE. Have you heard of Stanley Scott?

MAN. Beautiful isn't it?

CAROLINE. There doesn't seem to be anything except manholes.

MAN. You know, you should buy a plot right here. It's mountainous but I can see you've got strong legs.

CAROLINE. What about Stanley?

MAN. And there's a gorge. It's a beautiful, beautiful gorge and if you've a head for heights, which I suspect you do, you're going to love it, see?
And Stanley's here of course.

CAROLINE. Stanley's here?

MAN. And walking, tip-toeing across of that rocky summit, where you know a whole lot of people have died before you, well, that feeling is just what you've wanted your whole life. *Beat.* Magnitude. You crave it in your soul. But I'm telling you, nobody knew how unhappy they were, until they climbed to the top of that there gorge. You plummet or you don't, see, it's up to you. *Beat.* So, an immaculate conception. You're going to be a mother.

CAROLINE. Yes.

MAN. Have a Cigarette. You'll integrate.

CAROLINE takes a cigarette. Both smoke.

You know, I once forgot I was a father. *Beat.* But then I remembered. Where's the father figure? To your child, I mean.

CAROLINE. That's just adoption jargon. There isn't one.

MAN. A mother without a father? A wife without a...

CAROLINE. I'm married.

MAN. It's appropriate.

CAROLINE. I'm married to another woman. Well not married, just civil...ised.

MAN. No Daddies?

CAROLINE. No.

MAN. That's not civilised.

CAROLINE. That's why I've come to see you.

MAN. So that I could be your father figure?

CAROLINE. No. So that Stanley could be. Apparently.

MAN. Everyone needs a man in their life, dead or alive.

For that reason, I'll take you to see Stanley.

CAROLINE. See Stanley?

MAN. Amendment. Stanley's grave.

CAROLINE. Didn't you inform his family he had a grave? It might have saved my wife a lot of trouble.

MAN. It's not my fault her research skills can't keep up with her desire to put you in the family way several times over. Besides, I gave up having friends and making contact with the outside world.

Which regiment are you from?

CAROLINE. None?

MAN. A young woman?

CAROLINE. Old.

MAN. Still, you'd be popular amongst the troops.

CAROLINE. You're talking like a soldier.

MAN. From such a stick, such a splinter.

They smoke in silence.

So what exactly do you want to know about Stanley? What in your wildest dreams is the best and most macho story which would make your husband...

CAROLINE. Wife, well partner, just lover really, casual lover, actually, wife, wife.

MAN. And what story of Stanley could she bring home which would make her worthy of a hero's welcome in your arms?

CAROLINE. I can't think of one.

MAN. Perhaps there isn't one.

CAROLINE. Perhaps not.

MAN. I know. You want me to tell you what to do in this predicament of having to face your past and your future in one day. It's the fault of the support. *Strokes her face*: She's indulging you. She's putting you in the family way thousands of times over.

CAROLINE. Got another cigarette?

MAN. *Proffering cigarette*: You think you want retaliation running through your veins. It's an illusion. An illusion, see, which I've reduced to a faith. More than anything, she's allowed you to walk here in a dream. *Pause. Whispers*: You should leave your husband.

CAROLINE. Wife. And no, I shouldn't.

MAN. You have to face facts.

CAROLINE. Maybe. Maybe I've been asleep.

MAN. Anesthetized. But people change. People wake up.

CAROLINE. I am what I am.

MAN. But I can reinvent you. Try this for size. What if I was involved?

Co-parenting say. A father figure who knows where you're coming from.

CAROLINE. Wow. *Pause*. I'm just supposed to find Stanley.

MAN. Do you want to?

CAROLINE. -

MAN. Do you really?

CAROLINE. -

MAN. We're the same, you and me. I grew up handicapped too.

CAROLINE. I wasn't handicapped.

MAN. And everyone else was handicapped.

CAROLINE. I was gay.

MAN. I used to be too and my family hated me like yours do you.
But it's counterfeit. All of it. Look at me now.

CAROLINE. You're spritely.

MAN. Is this a date? *Beat.* I think this is a date.

CAROLINE. Fiona brought me out here to give me a family.

MAN. Fiona lives a life of denial and she loves it.

CAROLINE. Just tell me about Stanley.

MAN. Is that really what you want from me?

CAROLINE. *Pause.* What else could I have?

MAN. A family. A full God's honest family.

CAROLINE. I'm flattered you think I'm of a childbearing age.

MAN. You're blossoming.

CAROLINE. Me?

MAN. Si! You know, there's another option for an upstanding man and woman such as you and me. It would be easy, natural for us to have a family, a house by the sea. Just a polite offer.

CAROLINE. I'm not interested in men.

MAN. Let me wet your whistle. I know that Stanley's buried in sacrosanct ground. In the crypt on the edge of the village.

CAROLINE. *Pause.* And how do you know that?

As MAN says the following, he encircles CAROLINE. Enthralled, she's obviously recipient.

MAN. Because my Grandfather noticed Stanley's teeth not his politics. They took the bus together through Madrid, away from the siege, away from the fighting. The syllables from cafés polluting the air. They stopped at a burnt-out farmhouse. A pathetic picnic of chorizo and wafer. But before Stanley put food to mouth, he was shot through the stomach through a window and dragged away. Grandfather found him three miles up the road. Stanley died in his arms. Grandfather buried him. And I will bury him with Stanley.

MAN almost kisses CAROLINE. At the last minute he pulls away.

But their love for each other is an irrelevant story which I won't repeat out of respect for your current predicament. Your...wife though, she's looking for satisfaction in the wrong places. You won't find what you want here. She won't give you what you want at all. You have to accept that now as the truth. There's only one option for you as far as I'm concerned. *Pause.* I've been to a clinic. It's called The Valley of the Fallen. It's a place of redemption. They offer classes.

CAROLINE. Therapy?

MAN. Gay ran in my family too.

CAROLINE. Just because my Grandfather and your Grandfather were lovers?

MAN. And I've stopped that cycle. See, I'm happily married with three beautiful children.

CAROLINE. You offered yourself to me on a plate!

MAN. I'm in HR. Heterosexual reformation. When you're a father figure, like I am, you have to provide. You have to step up and get it up.

CAROLINE. *Pause.* So kiss me.

MAN kisses CAROLINE.

What am I doing?

CAROLINE kisses MAN. Suddenly, she stops.

MAN. Oh, come on! Hetero guilt's nowhere near as bad as gay shame.

CAROLINE. I got carried away.

MAN. But do you like it?

CAROLINE. It's not me, it's just not.

MAN. Relax. Let's jump in the hot tub.

CAROLINE. We've got wives!

MAN. But I've got prospects, see? We'll have children and children and more children and we'll watch our children have more children and more children and more children and their children will have more children and so forth ad infinitum!

CAROLINE. *Beat.* It's almost what I want.

MAN. Should I give you a moment to powder your nose and put your diaphragm in? *Beat.* I'm saying shall we meet in a day or two once you realised what I'm offering you?

Pause.

CAROLINE. Where can I reach you?

MAN. I'm always in the forth cubicle of the toilets at the Picasso museum.

FIONA. We won't be going to the Picasso museum.

CAROLINE turns around and realises that FIONA is stood watching them, and has been, unseen by the audience.

CAROLINE. Oh...Foof.

MAN. Hi.

Pause. MAN continues to stand awkwardly between CAROLINE and FIONA.

CAROLINE. I can explain.

FIONA. I've let you down.

CAROLINE. No.

FIONA. I ruined our chances.

CAROLINE. Babe.

FIONA. I'm not a father and I can't give you a son.

CAROLINE. You're my...

FIONA. No contest. Nothing.

Pause. FIONA turns away.

CAROLINE. Father figures are...

FIONA. Permanent fixtures. She won't remove Franco.

MAN becomes OLD WOMAN.

OLD WOMAN. No, I won't remove Franco. But I will help you
in a way which is both financially beneficial rather than
politically debasing or sexually confusing.

CAROLINE. I'm not sexually confused.

FIONA. I'd believe you, except for what you just showed me.
So I need to finish this.

Pause. To OLD WOMAN: I need a quick fix. I need to buy her a man.
Sell me a man. A family man, a soldier for her, a skeleton for her,
anything, as long as it's a man. As long as it's Stanley.

CAROLINE. Stanley's found and buried. What did you think you'd do?
Dig him up and bring him home?

OLD WOMAN. *Pause.* So, what's next Fiona? Francisco! Francisco!
Beat. The most affirming feature of Spanish children
is they will never speak about the Civil War.
Which is probably why you haven't met my Grandson yet,
seven, he is, but when he does arrive, I will offer him for a price.
Thirty thousand.

FIONA. *Pause.* Your Grandson?

OLD WOMAN. *Leaving:* I'll go and wake him. It's no trouble. Dead relatives
and living. Who would raise their dead?

OLD WOMAN exits.

CAROLINE. Francisco? *Beat.* Sweet name.

FIONA. Like Franco.

CAROLINE. You think?

FIONA. Lock the door.

CAROLINE. Why?

FIONA. Like Franco.

CAROLINE. He's only a child. There won't be a mark of the world on him.

We could love him.

FIONA. *Sitting down: Named after Franco? Lock the door.*

CAROLINE. *Nervously glancing at the door:* He won't be evil.

FIONA. Never said he would.

CAROLINE locks the door. Then, she hesitates.

CAROLINE. He doesn't have it easy here though, does he?

FIONA. It's relative.

CAROLINE. It must be hard.

FIONA. *Pause.* We forget just how hard it is to even be born.

Act III

FIONA and CAROLINE are where they were. Both sat down, drinking the dregs.

FIONA. She hasn't come back.

CAROLINE. Nope.

FIONA. S'alright. We can live without her.

Pause.

CAROLINE. You learn to live without certain things.

FIONA. Like father figures.

Silence.

CAROLINE. We both know what Stanley is now, don't we.

FIONA. No?

CAROLINE. We both know what Stanley is now.

FIONA. Don't.

CAROLINE. It's not that we didn't have something we wanted.

FIONA. Don't. Please.

CAROLINE. It's not that we didn't have something we wanted, is it?

FIONA. Dunno.

CAROLINE. It's that we lost something we had.

FIONA. *Pause.* Don't remember.

CAROLINE. What we had four years ago.

FIONA. *Pause.* Him.

CAROLINE. We lost...

CAROLINE. Our baby. The baby you made for us. The baby you grew for us.
The baby we'd called Stanley.

FIONA. I lost him.

CAROLINE. We lost Stanley.

FIONA. He'd be four now.

CAROLINE. I know. I know.

FIONA. Our baby boy.

CAROLINE. I know.

FIONA. I did a bad job.

CAROLINE. The doctors said it happens. Still births, you think they're something that used to happen, but they still happen.

Silence.

FIONA. I wanted to give you Stanley.

CAROLINE. Hush.

FIONA. But I've ruined it again, haven't I? Because we're never going to go to Spain now, are we?

CAROLINE. If we were in Spain, I'd leave you.

Silence. FIONA picks up her phone. She looks at it.

Referring to FIONA's phone: Leave it alone! Every night you hold it like a decorated egg hoping, praying it won't ring, the adoption won't break. I'm telling you it won't. She's not going to cancel the meeting. Why? Because you're perfect.

FIONA. Perfect. Missing a father figure. You proved we're missing one.

CAROLINE. *Tearing down the picture of Franco:* Fuck the father figure.

FIONA. That'll go on the bill now!

CAROLINE. So?

As CAROLINE is saying the below, she starts puts their clothes away in drawers.

You know, I thought I was self sufficient, a little damaged
from a repressive, homophobic upbringing.

But who isn't damaged?

I'm going to get ready for bed now. To get into our own bed now.

We might as well have stayed at home.

CAROLINE tears down any resemblance of the hotel room. She brings out ornaments and pictures in frames from under the bed. One is a nude statue. She dresses the bedside tables and hangs a large picture of herself and FIONA above the bed where FRANCO was hung.

The hotel room has become their bedroom at home.

We are at home.

FIONA. A family.

CAROLINE. Our child's empty bedroom ready in the next room.

Silence. FIONA looks at CAROLINE for a long time. Finally, FIONA's phone bleeps.

FIONA. Got signal.

The End.