

# **Negotiating Identity in Contemporary Playwriting**

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## **Abstract**

In this dissertation, I discuss the process of playwriting in Scottish dialect: why Scottish writers choose not to write in Standard English; how and why they choose their specific dialect; what problems lie in the writing of dialect plays; and what problems may arise in performance and production. Following on from that, I also investigate why Scottish playwrights often find themselves excluded from English theatres - particularly from the London stage - and what cultural stereotypes seem to fuel this problem. I have examined Scottish dialect plays and playwrights' accounts from the 1940s onwards, as well as considering the critical response to these plays. In the light of this contextual background, I also analyse my own personal experience as a playwright over the course of my PhD by Practice at the University of York, and my experience as a Glaswegian playwright at an English university in a traditional English town.

My dissertation begins by discussing why Scottish playwrights choose Scottish dialects, focussing in particular on the idea of language survival and resistance to English hegemony. I examine the merits and effects of urban and rural dialects, investigating why rural dialects are now largely neglected and why urban dialects are vital to representations of class and city life in modern Scotland. I scrutinise the problems of writing dialect, and the lack of official spelling and prevalence of profanity in urban dialects, which present particular problems. Audience reception will also be considered, examining the idea that non-Scottish audiences struggle to understand the dialect, and subsequently struggle to understand its humour. Finally, I consider audience responses towards Scottish dialect.

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## **Dedication**

This Ph.D. would have been absolutely nowhere without the love and support of Linda Hamilton, Archie Hamilton, and Tom Bruggenwirth. Even Dad's Big Book of Clichés can't describe how much I love you all.

## **Author's Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is my own work: the dissertation and accompanying portfolio and plays are the result of my research and playwriting practice over the course of the three years of my Ph.D at the University of York. I have not submitted this work for any other degree at the University of York, or at any other institution.

## I. Introduction

As far back as the 1600s, good Scottish playwriting has been unfairly labelled as the needle in the proverbial haystack. Former *Glasgow Herald* editor Christopher Small, for instance, once likened finding modern Scottish playwrights to finding 'snakes in the history of Iceland' (1977, p.iii). This idea stems largely from a misguided yet often repeated view of the Scottish Reformation, which argues that the Calvinists and the Church of Scotland completely suffocated Scottish playwriting during the Scottish Reformation, resulting in a three hundred year silence in Scotland.<sup>1</sup> We can look, for example, at Dawson Scott who suggests that the Scottish Reformation 'deliberately squeezed theatre out of public life for more than 300 years', and left us 'with no theatrical heritage to speak of' (2008, p40). I do not deny that Calvinism had some impact on Scottish theatrical output, but this particular view of the Reformation substantially exaggerates the problem. As Reid says, it is a 'seductively simple' narrative, which leaves us with the absurd suggestion that Scottish playwriting somehow miraculously sprouted out of the ground 'fully formed' in the 1930s (2013, p4). In fact, the history of Scottish playwriting is much more complex.

For a start, this version of history fails to take into account the fact that playwriting and theatrical performance still existed even during the Reformation, as documented by Findlay (1998) and McGavin (2007). Even if we did acknowledge that *some* suppression occurred, however, it would still be a serious misjudgement to say that Scottish playwriting somehow spontaneously reappeared midway through the Twentieth Century. There is a variety of easily identified Victorian-era Scottish playwrights, for a start. The most obvious of these is J.M. Barrie (1860-1937), an unquestionably successful Scottish playwright, who Hutchison rightly points out is unfairly overlooked by British theatre historians, on entirely 'dubious textual grounds', for lacking a sense of purpose in his writing (1998, p214). In disproving this supposed three-century

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<sup>1</sup> For more on the construction of this somewhat artificial version of history, see Reid (2013, p4) and Carruthers and MacDonald (2013, p143)

<sup>2</sup> See Scullion, 1998, p81.

<sup>3</sup> See Findlay (1998), Scullion (1998) and Bell (1998) for thorough coverage of Scottish

silence, we might also name David Crawford, a popular writer of comedies in the Eighteenth Century<sup>2</sup>, or William Clark in the Seventeenth Century, whose successful play *Marciano; or, The Discovery* was performed to great success at Holyrood House (Findlay, 1998, p63). Like many Scottish playwrights and performers from the 1600s through to the 1930s and 40s, these dramatists seem to have fallen under the radar.<sup>3</sup>

From the early Twentieth Century onwards, however, Scottish playwriting is better documented. Scottish dramatists have always been present in some form or other, but in the Twentieth Century, their development reached new levels of success. A century that began with the popular music hall and pantomime performances of the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Century then saw the birth of Unity Theatre in the 1930s and 40s; the establishment of new writing theatre The Traverse in the 1960s; and the beginnings of successful political theatre company 7:84 and a rush of Scottish urban drama in the 1970s. In the last two to three decades, Scottish playwrights have made a global name for themselves: writers like Liz Lochhead, David Harrower and David Greig have become well known internationally, whilst still retaining the influence of this rich history. Liz Lochhead's writing, for instance, is heavily influenced by music hall traditions, as Gardner points out.<sup>4</sup> Another example here is Gregory Burke; his internationally successful *Black Watch* (2007) - which effectively announced the birth of the National Theatre of Scotland - is clearly influenced by 7:84's work, and in particular, the ceilidh calling style of McGrath's 1974 play *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil*, as Reid (2013, p13) argues. Regardless of its influences though, *Black Watch* has made impressive steps in Scottish playwriting, still enjoying successful world touring after six years, with a constant stream of critical acclaim and overseas profit.

We should not take that, however, to mean that Scottish theatre is now integrated into theatres outside Scotland. On the contrary, Scottish theatre

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<sup>2</sup> See Scullion, 1998, p81.

<sup>3</sup> See Findlay (1998), Scullion (1998) and Bell (1998) for thorough coverage of Scottish playwrights in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, and 19<sup>th</sup> Centuries, respectively.

<sup>4</sup> Gardner, 2002, no pagination.



remains unquestionably distinct from English theatre: whilst England's new writing thrives largely in the 'national' theatres of London<sup>5</sup>, and to some lesser extent in other regional theatres like the Manchester Royal Exchange, Scottish theatre is a completely separate entity. New writing flourishes across the Scotland, but there are particular hives of activity in Edinburgh, at the Traverse Theatre, and across the city during the annual Edinburgh Festival, as well as in Glasgow, at the Tron Theatre, the Citizens' Theatre, and the Òran Mór. Moreover, there are some clear stylistic differences between English theatre and Scottish theatre, and different histories therein. Scottish playwrights, for example, are often much more clearly influenced by the vaudeville genre than are their English counterparts<sup>6</sup>, and the current themes and political preoccupations that interest Scottish playwrights will often differ from those found in London. Another more obvious difference, however, is the strong presence of Scots dialect plays in the Scottish theatre movement. A vast number of Scottish playwrights opt to write in their own dialect or in other dialects of Scotland, rather than in the Standard English found more commonly in England's theatres.

Although Scottish theatre is thriving in the venues mentioned, the separation of Scottish theatre from English theatre is not of Scotland's own making. There is a clear argument to be made that new Scottish plays – and more specifically, new plays written in Scottish dialect – are at a disadvantage in England. This fact is recognised not only by Scottish playwrights themselves, but also by English observers of the situation. Playwright Stephen Greenhorn - writer for the BBC, Paines Plough and the Traverse – told the *Sunday Times* he felt new Scottish writing was only playing 'to a ghetto audience' and couldn't reach wider crowds.<sup>7</sup>

Even non-Scottish theatre critics have been moved to comment on the situation: Lyn Gardner points out that despite a long line of Scottish playwrights who are

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<sup>5</sup> There is a wider discussion that might take place here, on the legitimacy of a 'National Theatre' in London that purports to take 'responsibility for fostering the health of the wider British theatre', and yet has no marked interest in Scottish theatre. We could question the idea of a national British theatre which necessitates the existence of a separate National Theatre of Scotland. Unfortunately, there is little space for such a discussion here.

<sup>6</sup> For more on this, see Gardiner (2002), Scott (2003), and Sierz (2005).

<sup>7</sup> Greenhorn, talking to Bowditch (2007, p9).

‘every bit as vibrant as... English and Irish equivalents’, Scots consistently find themselves missed off from English ‘lists of exciting and talented writers’.<sup>8</sup> In the rest of the article, speculating as to why this might be, Gardner cites Liz Lochhead’s play, *Perfect Days*<sup>9</sup>, directed by John Tiffany, during the run of which London audiences regularly complained that they ‘couldn’t understand what the actors were saying, because the play wasn’t written in ‘proper English’’.<sup>10</sup>

Such complaints are by no means uncommon among Scottish dialect playwrights, but nevertheless, there are those who dispute that there is any barrier at all, and the situation is not helped by comments made in ignorance. Mark Ravenhill is one such example, telling the *Sunday Times* he did not believe theatres or audiences ‘made the distinction between... a London writer and a Scottish writer’.<sup>11</sup> Of course, this seems easy for Ravenhill to say, given his status as an English playwright living in London, with no knowledge of the Scottish writer’s experience.

With this discourse in mind, my object in the course of this dissertation is to discuss the progression of Scottish dialect plays from page to stage; to examine firstly, why Scottish playwrights choose to write in Scottish dialects (even if it may put them at a possible disadvantage outside Scotland; an issue I will discuss later); secondly, to explore the process of writing a play in Scots dialect, and the associated problems and issues; thirdly, to investigate the idea that Scots struggle to reach audiences beyond Scotland; and finally, to investigate how Scots writers’ plays are received when they do reach such audiences, in comparison with their reception in Scotland. My intent therefore is to come to some conclusions about whether or not Scottish playwrights do suffer from some extra level of exclusion and difficulty in the journey from writing to performance.

As a general rule, this dissertation will be conducted with particular reference to

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<sup>8</sup> Gardner, 2002, no pagination.

<sup>9</sup> Lochhead, 1998.

<sup>10</sup> Gardner, 2002, no pagination.

<sup>11</sup> Ravenhill, talking to Sierz, 2005, p6.

the last two decades, with historical framing where relevant. I recognise, for instance, that much of today's Scottish dialect playwriting could not have come to pass without the groundbreaking work of the 1940s: Unity Theatre and McLeish's *The Gorbals Story* (1946); Lamont Stewart's *Starched Aprons* (1945) and *Men Should Weep* (1947); and Benedict Scott's *The Lambs of God* (1948), among others. This decade also marked the beginning of Glasgow's Citizens' Theatre<sup>12</sup>: a theatre founded on the view that 'if we are going to have Scottish plays, or plays by Scottish writers, the Scottish playwright will have to be encouraged'.<sup>13</sup> Equally, other eras should be noted as milestones: the 1970s were a particularly groundbreaking era for Scottish dialect theatre, with 'a surge of Scots-medium poetry, fiction, and drama', as noted by Findlay (1992, p11). Particularly of note, the 1970s witnessed a substantial movement in urban dialect drama, as will be noted in the course of this dissertation. My research cannot help but be framed by historical developments in Scottish playwriting, given that Scottish playwrights (including this author) are, as previously mentioned, building on their dramatic heritage. Having said that, it should be noted that my own experience as a writer is limited to the last five years, and much of the dissertation's focus will be on the current writing experience for modern Scottish playwrights, investigating whether there is an active, current disadvantage for Scottish playwrights, rather than an obsolete historical one.

For the purpose of making my own position clear from the outset, it should be noted that I am a Glaswegian playwright of Glaswegian and Ayrshire descent, born in Glasgow and educated there at a south-side state school of almost solely Glaswegian pupils. At 18, I moved to England, to study at the University of York, and have now lived in York for seven years. As such, my own speech is a mixture of Southside and East-end Glaswegian dialect from my father's side and from my peers at school, and Kilmarnock-centric Ayrshire dialect from my mother's side. Perhaps the closest playwright to my own natural dialect is Douglas Maxwell; a playwright from Girvan, in southern Ayrshire, who also writes in a mixture of Ayrshire and Glaswegian. The children's language in Maxwell's *Decky Does a*

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<sup>12</sup> For a more indepth history of the Citizens' Theatre, see Coveney (1990) as a starting point.

<sup>13</sup> James Bridie, quoted in Milne, 1945.

*Bronco* (2001), for example, almost exactly replicates the way I myself spoke as a child.

My accent is further complicated, however, by the fragments of predominantly, and perhaps surprisingly, Southern English dialect I have picked up (or perhaps felt obliged to adopt to be more understood) from other students and staff at the University of York campus.<sup>14</sup> My experience is that, as a Scottish student living in England, I have had to constantly check and adapt my spoken language – the words I use; the strength of my accent; the speed of my speech – in order for others to understand me. As a Scottish writer in England, my experience is much the same: playwriting has become a negotiation of how much I can allow my Scottish identity to be a part of my work. In my first plays in England, I deliberately self-edited to create a received pronunciation English, and sound less Scottish, because I was made to understand my mode of speech would be more accessible that way. With more experience of my craft, I have developed the confidence to include more Scots dialect in my writing – and that has brought about its own problems. I discuss these issues in more detail over the course of the dissertation, but for now, it suffices to note my specific dialect, and to note my creative struggles relating to that dialect.

For the purpose of clarity, I refer only to Scots ‘dialects’ in this dissertation, rather than to ‘languages’. I acknowledge that there is a wide debate on the subject, not limited solely to Scotland, about whether dialects qualify as languages in their own right.<sup>15</sup> However, I am by no means an expert in this field. In this area, I will therefore defer to the popular argument, as put forward for instance by Crystal in the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language*, that

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<sup>14</sup> One might have thought it would be easier to pick up a Yorkshire accent in York, but the university’s population comes largely from areas other than Yorkshire, in my experience, and as a student, I very rarely come into contact with anyone actually from York. It is an intriguing subject, but one that would require a paper of its own to address it.

<sup>15</sup> There is a great deal of writing in this area, but as a starting point, Bauer (2002) writes in a particularly useful way on what might be defined as languages and dialects amongst international varieties of English, including Scottish dialects. McArthur (1987) provides an interesting argument on seeing all world English dialects (including Scots) as possible future languages. I also found it particularly helpful to look at Romaine (1994) and the discussion of whether Hawai’i Creole is a language or a dialect in literature.

all forms of Scots are 'something less than a language', and therefore to be categorized as dialects for all intents and purposes (1995, p899).

For related reasons, I will largely eschew the issues concerning Gaelic plays, except where it becomes relevant to Scots dialect theatre. Given Gaelic's official status as a language completely separate from English, issues concerning Gaelic theatre are obviously different, but the most pertinent problem here is that less than 2% of the Scottish population speaks Gaelic with any degree of fluency, and the language bears no resemblance to English. The comprehension levels of wider audiences therefore present a massive problem not necessarily present in a play written in a Glaswegian dialect; a dialect which at least has a strong basis in English. In any event, I myself lack the skill to translate Gaelic texts, and in that respect, my research in the area would be significantly handicapped.

## **II. Defining the term 'Scottish playwright'**

Attempting to define what constitutes any given nationality - and, subsequently, which people can lay claim to that nationality - is a source of constant debate, and there is little room to go into depth here. However, as a general rule, I would agree with those academics, including Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992) and Caglar (1997), who see nationality as a personal decision for the individual, unenforced by the state: 'citizens should be free to negotiate their own cultural self-definitions' (Caglar, 1997, p182). In defining those that we can regard as Scottish playwrights, therefore, I would posit that the title of 'Scottish playwright' is applicable to any playwright who has lived or does live in Scotland, and who self-identifies as Scottish, regardless of their place of birth, culture or speech. Moreover, the Scottish Society of Playwrights takes the same view: as Brown puts it, the society is open to 'any playwright working in Scotland, as well as those who perceive themselves as Scottish working furth<sup>16</sup> of the country' (2013, p91).

Having said that, the basis for this dissertation is my personal experience of

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<sup>16</sup> 'Furth' - outside.

being a Scottish playwright, raised in Glasgow, who chooses to write in her own Scots dialect. Much of my discussion of playwriting motivation is therefore only applicable to Scottish writers who have – at least at some point in their lives – spoken with a Scots dialect. My later discussion of the poor treatment of Scots dialect in Scottish schools, for example, is not relevant as a writing motivation for playwrights who were raised with any variety of non-Scots dialect. If such a playwright chooses to write in a Scots dialect, their decision to leave their natural dialect behind is an equally valid choice, but one which is motivated by different factors from those discussed in this dissertation. For the purposes of ease in discussion, therefore, my discussion of Scottish playwrights will only refer to individuals whose own dialect is or has at some point been a variation of Scots.

Current writing location bears no relation to this study: if a playwright has a spoken Scots dialect, and chooses to write plays in Scots dialect, they are relevant to my research, regardless of whether they are currently resident in Scotland. The majority of the writers discussed do live in Scotland, but some – like myself – have lived and worked outside Scotland for much of their writing career. London-based Scottish playwright Rona Munro is one important example here, whose dialect plays bear huge significance to my research. Munro has spent almost twenty years in London, and a significant number of her plays have been written for the Hampstead Theatre, but the writer maintains that she feels a ‘dual’ Scottish and Londoner identity<sup>17</sup>, and continues to write in Scots dialect, in such plays as *The Maiden Stone* (1995), *The Last Witch* (2009) and her upcoming National Theatre of Scotland project *The James Plays* at the 2014 Edinburgh Festival. Iain Heggie provides another vital example, in that the most significant Scots dialect works of his writing career so far - *A Wholly Healthy Glasgow* (1987), *American Bagpipes* (1988), and *An Experienced Woman Gives Advice* (1995) – were produced as a result of his residency at the Manchester Royal Exchange. Both writers, and others like them, are included in this study of Scottish playwrights, and their various successes and obstacles provide insights

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<sup>17</sup> Munro, 2012, no pagination.

as useful as those found amongst playwrights inside Scotland.

Having said that, my approach does necessitate the omission of certain playwrights whose work has been undeniably influential in Scottish theatre. Perhaps the most prominent of these is John McGrath, whose work had major influence on Scottish – and British – playwriting and on how Scottish theatre production companies operate. Although well-known for his film and television work, McGrath is arguably best known for founding theatre company 7:84 and for writing the company's subsequent triumph, *The Cheviot, the Stag, and the Black, Black Oil* (1981). The tour of this production is credited with reinvigorating Scottish touring theatre - particularly in small local venues and in poorer and less populated areas of Scotland – and thus blazing a trail for other companies to follow, as discussed by Cameron (1990, p.xvi) and Holdsworth (2003, p113). It is easy to see, for example, how the National Theatre of Scotland's current touring practice is influenced by the history of 7:84; a Scottish company that notoriously worked in pubs, working men's clubs and town halls. McGrath's influence on Scottish and British political theatre today is significant, with work that proved that the local could be global. As Holdsworth rightly says, *The Cheviot* in particular was a 'seminal piece of British political theatre that proved local stories could take on universal significance' (2003, p112). Having said that, McGrath was born of Irish parents, raised in Merseyside, and attended the University of Oxford, before moving to Scotland later to form the Scottish branch of 7:84. As such, he had no natural Scots dialect of his own, and so, while he did choose to write plays in Scots, he was operating in a dialect other than his own, which, as discussed, would require a discussion of motivations entirely separate from that found in this dissertation. If I were able to devote more space to a history of Scottish theatre, McGrath would undoubtedly feature centrally, but as it stands, his case is regrettably not relevant to the majority of this dissertation.

At the other end of the spectrum, this dissertation will also eschew some Scottish playwrights who choose not to write in Scots dialect, except where they discuss relevant reasons why they avoid doing so. This applies particularly to

Edinburgh-based playwright Zinnie Harris, for instance, whose work is of obvious significance amongst Scottish playwrights today. Harris' plays are generally written either in Standard English, or in other non-Scots dialects - including the patois of Tristan da Cunha in *Further than the Furthest Thing* (2000) – and thus they bear little relevance to a discussion of the process of writing in Scots dialect, and the experiences of Scots dialect plays in reception.

### III. Why choose to write in a Scots dialect?

#### i. An instinctive choice?

It is a truism that emergent playwrights are often told: 'write what you know.' The constant debate about the questionable wisdom of this old adage would take up more space than I have room to detail here, but regardless, it remains a frequent tip offered to new writers: see, for instance, the National Theatre's recent video series of guidance for aspiring writers, where playwright Richard Bean (2011) tells us, 'It's an old one but – write what you know. Write something exotic that perhaps other people won't know.'<sup>18</sup> Generally, this advice refers to plot, but since playwriting textbooks rarely offer any direct advice on use of dialect, new writers are obliged to take what tips they can find. Whilst not necessarily the definition of 'exotic', it is an easy leap to see why Scottish writers might choose to write in Scots dialects on this basis – it is what they know, after all, and likely what comes most naturally. Booker Prize-winning novelist and playwright James Kelman attests, for example, that he chose to write in Scots dialect for his plays and novels because it was what seemed most natural: 'I thought to use my own background and experience. I wanted to write as one of my own people' (2003, p62).

Conversely, there are those that make the point that, if it seems natural to write in Scottish dialects, it might also seem *unnatural* and difficult for Scottish

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<sup>18</sup> See Fountain (2007, p9) as an example of a textbook by a well-known practitioner offering this advice to new playwrights. An interesting development is offered by Taylor (2002, p29) who argues that a better piece of advice would be to 'write what you *understand*' rather than what you know.



playwrights to write in non-Scottish; to write speech, for example, in correct English. The reasoning behind this stems largely from the idea of ‘covert Scotticisms’, as addressed by John Corbett (1997, p3). ‘Covert Scotticisms’ are those parts of Scottish speech that Scottish people do not realise are unique to them. Examples can range from words and phrases to grammatical rules and verbal tics, and, Corbett<sup>19</sup> argues, they are endemic in Scottish daily conversation.<sup>20</sup> Scottish writers, then, might attempt to use these ‘Scotticisms’ in their dialogue and prose, without realising that non-Scot readers and audiences will not understand. Brown posits – somewhat condescendingly - that Scottish writers, when attempting to write in correct English, experience such a level of ‘interference’ from their natural dialect that Standard Scottish English is essentially the best they can manage.<sup>21</sup>

If this argument is taken at face value, it might perhaps seem easier for Scots playwrights to write in their own dialects, rather than to attempt to write for non-Scots characters and accidentally risk a supposedly English character speaking in covert Scotticisms. This argument seems to me, however, to present at least two problems: first of all, it gives credence to the strange idea that Scottish writers are somehow less in control of their craft than non-Scots; and secondly, it would seem to support the notion that taking the easy option, and perhaps also the lazy option, is the best way to write.

However, some well-known writers do adhere to the idea that Scots writers simply cannot write in non-Scots dialects, and in that sense, it is relevant to mention it in a discussion of writers’ motivations. Whilst we may not agree that Scottish writers are incapable of recognising their own ‘Scotticisms’ – or at the

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<sup>19</sup> *ibid*, p.3.

<sup>20</sup> In his work, Corbett (1997, p3) provides a large group of Scots with a list of words and phrases, and asks them to identify those which non-Scots would find peculiar. In fact, the list is entirely composed of Scotticisms, but the group failed to pick up on that, believing some of them – the ‘covert Scotticisms’ - to be standard English any non-Scot would recognise. Examples included ‘the back of nine’ – a Scottish indication of time, meaning ‘near nine o’clock’ – and ‘tablet’ – a kind of sweet, not dissimilar to fudge.

<sup>21</sup> Brown, 1997, no pagination. Standard Scottish English is recognised as a variety of Scottish dialect so similar to proper English as to be almost indistinguishable, except for minor grammatical differences and certain vocabulary differences that make it uniquely Scottish. SSE is frequently used, for example, by Scottish newsreaders and journalists. See Corbett (1997, p17), as well as Sundkvist (2011, p171), Aitken (1984), Beal (1997), and Miller (2008).

very least, having a proof-reader who notices them – there are writers who make this a predominant part of their decision to write plays and prose in Scots dialects. This was certainly the point made by Scottish writer Lewis Grassie Gibbon, when he wrote that ‘nearly every Scots writer of the past writing in orthodox English has not only been incurably second-rate, but incurably behind the times’ (2001, p126). Gibbon’s theory was that Scottish writers have to work so hard to learn to write in correct English and rid themselves of Scots dialect, that by the time they manage it, they are too ‘exhausted’ to think about ‘originality of research or experiment’ (ibid, p126). This is, of course, an extraordinarily sweeping and flawed declaration: numerous authors, playwrights and poets have since (and indeed prior to Gibbon’s statement) proved perfectly capable of writing excellent work in Standard English.<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, Gibbon is not alone: Sydney Goodsir Smith also argued that his own plays are in Scots because Scottish playwrights are more capable, ‘more expressive and potent’, when they write in Scots than they could be in English (1951, p30).

To say, however, that instinct and familiarity are the only motivations for choosing a Scots dialect is to attribute a false neutrality to many Scots writers: that they only choose Scots dialects because it is what they know or what they do best. As Lenz argues, the choice to write in Scots dialect is political: ‘The decision to write a play in Scots is still a political step. With some authors, the choice of Scots is clearly a statement of national and cultural politics’ (1999, p352).<sup>23</sup>

## **ii. The decline of written Scots**

The decline of the Scots dialect has a well-documented history. Sundkvist (2011, p169) and McArthur (1987, p10) point out that written and spoken Scots dialects have been under threat since the point of the Union of the Crowns in

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<sup>22</sup> There are so many that it seems unfair to pick just one, but for an example, we might look at David Greig’s critically acclaimed plays, including *Europe* (1995) and *The Cosmonaut’s Last Message to the Woman He Once Loved in the Former Soviet Union* (1999), all of which are written in standard English, often about non-Scottish characters.

<sup>23</sup> Translated by Brown, Ramage and Sherlock (2000, p3).

1603. As McArthur puts it, the development of Scots as an individual language was 'socioculturally aborted' at the point of the Union (1987, p10). The Scots language had been struggling anyway, as many regional dialects do, against the hegemony of England's national language. Eight years after the Union of the Crowns, however, came a resultant blow from which Scots dialect has never properly recovered: the publication of the King James Bible.<sup>24</sup> The King James Bible was published in 1611, and owing to a perceived similarity between English and Scots, it was thought that one royally authorised translation was sufficient: no alternative Scots version was offered (Bell and Grant, 1977, p145). As a result, the English of the King James Bible became a staple of Scottish church services, as well as being used to teach Scottish children to read (Sundkvist, 2011, p169). Usage of both written and spoken Scots became marginalised from that point onwards, and the situation was only worsened at the Union of Parliaments in 1707, when English was made the only official national language of Scotland (ibid, p169).

As English became the language of government as well as that of church and school, Scots dialects were effectively barred from public institutions. Out of this exclusion the idea emerged that Scots dialects, with no authoritative voice or influence, were 'vulgar', 'barbaric' and 'parochial' (Corbett, 1997, p7). Scots writers began to deliberately dissociate themselves from written Scots: the Renaissance poet William Drummond of Hawthornden, for example, retrospectively removed any trace of Scots from his already published work<sup>25</sup> while philosopher, economist and historian David Hume sent his transcripts to England to have an editor systematically remove any hint of Scottish dialect.<sup>26</sup> At the same time, the rising popularity of William Shakespeare's English works offered a way for Scottish playwrights to escape the supposed provincial clumsiness of their native tongue (Corbett, 1997, p7).

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<sup>24</sup> This point is widely agreed by writers on Scots dialect: see Sundkvist (2011, p169), Corbett (1997, p7), Bell and Grant (1977), and Matheson and Matheson (2000, p212) among others.

<sup>25</sup> Corbett, 1997, p7.

<sup>26</sup> Matheson and Matheson, 2000, p216.

Today, the situation has not improved: as in the 1600s, Scots dialects are still seen to be ‘the language of the unsophisticated, the uneducated, the unserious’ (Matheson and Matheson, 2000, p217). Even in speech, the Scottish are notoriously diglossic, having an English dialect for formal conversation and a Scots dialect for informal conversation. This is actively encouraged, given that Scotland’s institutions still effectively bar Scots dialects. A study by Melchers found that a group of Scots interviewed considered it improper to speak their own dialect in job interviews or while speaking to their school’s headmaster (1985, p98).<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, Scottish schools actively discourage written Scottish dialects. While students may speak in a Glaswegian or an Aberdonian dialect at home, the ‘correct’ way to write, whether academically or creatively, is in Standard English. Many schools even go so far as to say that Scots dialects are not valid at all in either written or spoken form, being simply ‘bad English’ (Matheson and Matheson, 2000, p16).

Matheson and Matheson argue that this dissociation with Scots dialects also extends to the media and theatre, pointing out that Scots (like many with regional dialects) struggle to gain national work as presenters on TV and radio – unless they can contrive to get rid of ‘the slightest trace of a Scottish accent’ (2000, p217). This is an exaggeration now, but the argument remains essentially true: Scottish Standard English is acceptable on Scottish television and radio, but it is rare to hear anything more pronounced, as demonstrated by Sally Magnussen and Jackie Bird - current *Reporting Scotland* anchors - who both speak with barely perceptible Scots accents, despite being on BBC Scotland and being from Lanarkshire and Glasgow respectively. This is, incidentally, only with reference to Scottish broadcasting: a Scot’s chances in UK-wide broadcasting are even lower, as Matheson and Matheson point out (ibid, p217). In 2012, BBC Comedy Commissioner Cheryl Taylor announced that the BBC would be doing its best to branch out into more regional comedy in the ‘North West and beyond’.<sup>28</sup> Change is still slow in coming in the areas ‘beyond’ the English border, however:

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<sup>27</sup> Indeed, this is likely true of many other regional dialects, and there is a larger conversation to be had about why only ‘the Queen’s English’ is acceptable in formal situations, but that would require more space than this paper would allow.

<sup>28</sup> Cheryl Taylor, talking to Thorpe (2012, no pagination).

successful Scottish comedian Greg Hemphill's comedy series *Blue Haven* had the support of BBC Scotland for three years, but it was cancelled without further development in 2012 over concerns at BBC London that the series would be not be transferable to England.<sup>29</sup>

The situation has, until recently, been as bad, if not worse, in national theatre, where Scottish writers and actors have found it necessary to 'dissimulate their Scottishness' in order to be taken seriously (Matheson and Matheson, 2000, p217). In 1974, playwright and poet Edwin Morgan attested that theatre directors were 'hypnotised rigid' by the idea that Scots on stage should speak RP English: 'Only rarely do Scottish theatre audiences hear that modest and unforced reflection of their own speech-habits which an English or American audience takes for granted' (1974, p163). Today, that situation is changing: the efforts of the Traverse Theatre and the National Theatre of Scotland – whose launch project *Home* brought dialects and accents from across Scotland to the stage - have meant that Scottish accents have become more common in theatre, at least inside Scotland. Over time, efforts like this may be able to change the institutionalised opinion that Scottish dialect is not suitable either for performance or for playwriting.

To an extent, Scottish institutions – including schools and government – have attempted to rectify the situation. In an attempt to reintroduce the teaching of Scots, for example, the Scots Language Society, founded in 1972, have tried to promulgate Lallans. Lallans, originally a term used to refer the whole of Scots language, is now used to refer to a standardised written version of Scots; an amalgamation of various elements of early and modern Scots, with set grammar rules and spellings. Although not wide-spread, some primary schools (including this author's) do teach Lallans, however briefly, and it is possible - but by no means essential or even common - to study Lallans texts at high school during an Advanced Higher English course.<sup>30</sup> Government, too, has tried to make Lallans

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<sup>29</sup> See Logan (2012) among others for more on this.

<sup>30</sup> The Scottish equivalent of an English A Level. The clue here, however, is in the name: if your school choose to study Lallans during Advanced Higher English, it makes up only a small part of the largely proper English coursework, and there is no wholly Lallans or Scots course as yet.

more popular: the Scottish National Party, for example, published a Lallans translation of its manifesto in the 2002 election (McLeod and Smith, 2006, p25).

As a constructed language, however, Lallans has faced the same kind of criticisms as have been previously levelled at Esperanto: the Lallans brand of Scots feels false, enforcing some words and spellings not seen for five hundred years, and attempting to introduce some that never existed in the first place. A case in point might be the Scots Language Society's new usage of the word 'wabsteid' to mean 'website'.<sup>31</sup> Whilst new technology necessitates new words, the words usually develop as a result of common usage and daily conversation: as Wallraff says, it 'catches on with a sub-culture or with everyone, and eventually finds its way into dictionaries' (2006, p77). However, since Lallans has no daily conversation, existing only in its written form, new words are picked somewhat arbitrarily with no natural evolution, and thus a distinctly synthetic feel. Problems like this have led to an ambivalence towards Lallans usage among Scottish people, and the language has not been adopted in any meaningful way (Corbett, 1997, p15). Lallans, therefore, cannot hope to solve the problems of dying Scots dialects.

### **iii. The Playwright's response**

In my own experience, the barring of Scots dialects from Scottish institutions is a real and serious issue. In my case, the observation of Matheson and Matheson (2000, p16) on current Scottish education was unquestionably accurate: I was personally taught at school that Scots dialects were 'bad English'. One notable instance was a Scottish mathematics teacher who insisted for three years that if we answered a question aloud, we should answer it in perfect RP English: if we said, for example, 'twenty', 'thirty' or 'forty' with a natural Glaswegian glottal stop ("twen'y", "thir'y", "for'y") then our answer was marked as wrong, irrespective of whether the calculation was correct. Like many others, I was instructed to think that Scottish dialect is only appropriate in informal conversation with other Scots, and is certainly inappropriate for written work. My own playwriting response on this issue, then, has been a gradual attempt to

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<sup>31</sup> See Scots Language Society (2012a) for more on this.

reintroduce a dialect I feel I have been taught not to use anymore: I want to reconnect with the dialect I lost as a child. My motivation here, realistically, is not to reinvigorate or re-educate people about a dying language - I have no real feeling that the Scottish language will die out without my support as a writer - but rather, I feel that my own personal language will be lost if I do not reconnect with it.

Nevertheless, across the Twentieth Century, we can identify a wide range of Scottish playwrights writing in Scots dialects specifically because they feel they have to defend their language from fading into obscurity. Lenz spotlights a wide range of playwrights, from Lamont Stewart's *Men Should Weep* (1947) and McLellan's *The Flowers o Edinburgh* (1948) through to Glover's *Bondagers* (1991) and McClean's *Julie Allardyce* (1993), all of whom write with the aim to protect and 'enrich Scots as a fully-fledged language', reinstating old and obscure terms and phrases with the clear idea of preventing dialect erosion (Lenz, 2000, p6). Glover's *Bondagers*, for example, featured a large number of words used only infrequently in Scots today, and when it was performed at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 1995, theatre-goers were provided with a glossary to tell them more about the meaning behind the words (Lenz, 2000, p8). Similarly, in response to being asked why he would choose to write plays in Scots, Sydney Goodsir Smith maintained he had a clear mission; to protect 'the soul of Scotland', by keeping its language from dying (1951, p30).

Some playwrights, including Goodsir Smith, also tried to engage with the idea of writing in Lallans; writing plays with the purpose of maintaining a written Scots dialect. Goodsir Smith's plays, including *The Wallace* (1960) and *The Stick-Up* (1969), are some of only a few written in Lallans, however. As detailed earlier, Lallans is mostly written rather than spoken, presenting a particular problem in playwriting: whilst novels and poems can be read slowly and the language dissected, plays are obviously meant to be performed, and even native Scots will struggle to understand spoken Lallans if not provided with the written text in front of them. As Lenz rightly points out, it would 'strain the patience' of the

audience, and thus Lallans playwrights are reasonably few and far between (2000, p8).

On the other hand, there are far more Scots writers who, like myself, write in modern Scots dialects in response to continued institutional discrimination against their dialect. As already mentioned, schools across Scotland have taught Scots children 'for several centuries' that the language of their family and friends is 'vulgar and debased' and they 'must learn to speak proper English.'<sup>32</sup> Few Scottish writers today seem to have escaped this treatment, and the result is that many lose their natural dialect as they go through schooling. Playwright Liz Lochhead recalls how she felt she had to lose her Scots tongue and write as though she were 'English, middle-class and posh' in order to succeed.<sup>33</sup> William Macllvanney expresses an unease in speaking his natural dialect, and an angry disconnect with his childhood self: 'I spoke Scots until I was five, and I went to primary school, and I was taught English - what I resent is that I was taught English to the *suppression* of Scots.'<sup>34</sup> As a result of this kind of education, Scots writers, this author included, often feel the need to write in Scots dialects as a way to reconnect with what they've lost, and to reassert their identity: Macllvanney goes on to say that a large part of his writing motivation is to try to 'embrace the dichotomies' of his character and find a way to happily marry his taught English with his natural Scottish.<sup>35</sup>

For Scottish playwrights, this motivation frequently manifests itself not only in the drive to pick up a pen, but also in what we write once we have picked it up. Protagonists who lose their Scottish mother tongue and therefore their culture, and consequently suffer for it, are not an uncommon feature in Scottish plays. In one particularly famous example, *Dead Dad Dog* by John McKay (1988), protagonist Alec (or Eck, to his dad) attempts to speak university-educated 'proper' English to obtain a BBC job and date his London-based girlfriend. The reappearance of his dead (and very Scottish) dad Willie prevents him from doing

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<sup>32</sup> Historian Paul Scott, interviewed in Logan (2003, no pagination).

<sup>33</sup> Lochhead interviewed in Brown (1984, p48).

<sup>34</sup> Macllvanney interviewed in Murray and Tait (1996a, p137).

<sup>35</sup> Macllvanney interviewed in Murray and Tait (1996a, p137).



either. By the end, Eck is not particularly sad about that, and embraces his Scots tongue and heritage. We should also note that during Alec's job interview at the BBC - where he pitches a programme spoken in Scots dialects - McKay takes a few pointed jabs at a culture that sees Scots dialect as unintelligent:

ALEC Em, from Scotland. Scottish people. That's what it's about... em 'parochial', what do you mean by... Yes. I realise of course you're aiming at a national market...<sup>36</sup>

A similar theme exists too in *Somersaults*, written by Iain Finlay Macleod (2013) and produced by both the National Theatre of Scotland in 2011 and the Finborough Theatre in 2013. Again, a young Scottish man (James), this time a Cambridge graduate, attempts to make a success of himself whilst deliberately avoiding his childhood Scots dialect (as well as, in this case, his childhood Gaelic vocabulary). As James starts to realise that he no longer remembers the words of his dialect, corresponding cracks start to appear in his constructed life: his marriage to a trophy wife shatters, he loses his job and, reminiscent of *Dead Dad Dog*, his relationship with his dying father becomes a central focus of the play. As Silverman puts it, *Somersaults* is primarily about the effect of smothering your natural dialect: '[The play's] thrust is that language defines identity. In losing a few words, we do not just lose sounds. We endanger traditions, memories and relationships.'<sup>37</sup>

At a deeper level, however, the choice to write in Scots dialect here is not just about regaining a lost dialect, but about feeling that said dialect has something to prove. Having been instructed throughout education, with reinforcement from government and media, that Scots dialects are just 'bad English', Scots playwrights often choose to write in Scots dialects simply to demonstrate that the dialects *can* create great work; that their lexicon *is* eloquent as a writer's tool. As Goodsir Smith puts it, he writes to prove that Scots dialects are 'capable of

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<sup>36</sup> McKay, 1988, p158. The ellipses are McKay's own, rather than any shortening of the extract on my part.

<sup>37</sup> Silverman, 2013, no pagination.

coping with any subject in heaven or earth or hell' (1951, p30). It is interesting here to note that this is often part of the motivation for new Scots translations of classic texts: take, for example, *Tartuffe* as translated by Liz Lochhead (1985). Lochhead made a point of noting that her critically-acclaimed translation of Molière's Seventeenth Century French text could not have been written without the 'sharp tongue of her [Scottish] granny'<sup>38</sup>, creating what Stevenson calls proof of the 'range of registers and possibilities offered' by Scots dialect (2004, p121). Morgan perhaps best describes the Scots writer's need to prove the validity of Scots dialect when talking about his translation of *Cyrano de Bergerac*<sup>39</sup>: 'If a Scots translation can work with the best French classical tragedy there is, then surely that proves something.'<sup>40</sup>

#### iv. Peer Pressure

Another persuasive influence in the choice to write plays in Scots dialect may seem a more surprising one: the notion of peer pressure amongst Scots writers. Perhaps, given the strength of feeling that the Scots dialect ought to be protected, this is understandable, but Scottish writers as a circle have been, and arguably to some extent still are, surprisingly vehement when other Scots choose not to write in their native dialect. Playwright Stewart Conn, in interview with Ian Brown, acknowledged that he was aware of other Scottish writers referring to Norman McCaig as a 'quisling' or a traitor, because he was not writing in 'any brand of Scots.'<sup>41</sup> Conn goes on to say that the pressure to write in Scots is in some ways 'a strange millstone round the neck of a Scottish writer'; writing even in minimal Scots, he argues, makes it harder for your work to be accepted outside Scotland, but toning down the Scots dialect makes it harder to be accepted *inside* Scotland.<sup>42</sup> This dissertation will investigate the veracity of the first claim later, but for now, it suffices to say that many writers feel this pressure to conform, or be labelled a turncoat. In interview with Brian Logan,

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<sup>38</sup> Lochhead, 1985, p.i.

<sup>39</sup> Morgan, 1992.

<sup>40</sup> Morgan, interviewed in Wilson (2000, no pagination).

<sup>41</sup> Conn, interviewed in Brown (1984, p48).

<sup>42</sup> *ibid*, p48.

David Harrower - writer of *Knives in Hens* (1997) and *Blackbird* (2006) - said he felt that Scottish theatre obliges its writers to proclaim their nationality in their work, and that he believed it was 'time for us to stop thinking so explicitly about Scottishness.'<sup>43</sup>

Interestingly, though, this idea that to be Scots is to write in Scots does not come solely from other Scottish writers. A surprising amount of pressure to write in Scots dialects and about Scottish issues is placed on Scots playwrights by non-Scot theatre critics. For example, we can look at what can only be described as a dismissive 'get back in the Scottish kitchen' mind-set from London critic Michael Billington (1998), who obviously felt obliged to comment that while Liz Lochhead had produced a nice enough 'Hollywoodish comedy' in *Perfect Days*, and David Harrower was competent as a writer of 'urban ennui', Scottish writers seemed to him to be 'eschewing' contemporary Scotland and Scottish politics. It is an interesting notion, and one has to question whether the same would be said of a non-Scots writer: would Billington also level criticism at Michael Frayn for writing *Copenhagen* (2003), to take one example, when Frayn could have written a play set in his home county Surrey instead? As Eddie Gibb points out, Billington's comment was 'the metaphorical equivalent of rolling a hand-grenade into the Traverse bar' for Scots playwrights<sup>44</sup>, but such comments from non-Scot critics and theatres are not uncommon. As David Greig rightly asserts, many dramatists writing in Scots dialect feel they are trapped and 'trying to free [themselves] from the prison of identity politics'; a prison created by writers and critics both in and outside Scotland.<sup>45</sup>

#### **IV. The selection of particular Scots dialects**

Having examined the main motivations for choosing to write in Scots more generally, I will turn now to why writers alight on particular Scottish dialects. In my own writing experience, I rarely - if ever - give my characters my own accent

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<sup>43</sup> Harrower, interviewed in Logan (2003, no pagination).

<sup>44</sup> Gibb, 1998, no pagination.

<sup>45</sup> Greig interviewed in Gibb (1998, no pagination).

exactly as it is: the reasons for selecting a specific Scottish dialect are far more complex than simply choosing it because it is the same as your own.

It is important to note here that the diversity of dialect across Scotland is immense, and arguably surprising for the size of the nation. As Macaulay (2002, p227) noted, Scotland's population size is less than 2% of America's, and yet by comparing surveys by Kurath (1949) and Mather and Speitel (1975, p51), Scottish dialects regularly had more than ten times as many words for terms that appeared to be used uniformly across America. As Macaulay puts it, 'diversity is not necessarily linked to size' (2002, p227). It would be difficult to place an exact number on how many dialects exist in Scotland, but as a starting point, there are thirty-three counties in Scotland, each with their own distinctive dialectical features. Having said that, many Scots dip in and out of several dialects, dependent on their upbringing and education, among other things. My own dialect, as mentioned, is a mixture of my paternal family's Paisley dialect, my maternal family's contrasting broad Ayrshire, and my upbringing in Glasgow's south side, where the dialect is predominantly Standard Scottish English – and this is a relatively uncomplicated example. It is not uncommon for Scottish people today to have relatives from a variety of significantly different dialectical areas – Shetland, Glasgow, Aberdeen, etc. – and to take on elements of all those areas in their own speech, creating other hybrid dialects. Even considering county areas then, it is difficult to define exactly where one Scottish dialect stops and where another begins: Macaulay notes that it would be impossible to draw accurate isoglosses across a map of Scotland, because people would continually 'fall on the wrong side of the line' (2002, p230). Nevertheless, for the purposes of this investigation, it is necessary to draw up some basic headings to make discussion more manageable.

Whilst there are substantial differences from one Scots dialect to another, the most noticeable of these differences comes when we look at the gap between dialects from Scotland's major cities, and those from its more rural towns and villages. This gap seems to exist irrespective of where people are on the map – despite their geographical closeness, central belt Glaswegians are no more

connected by their accent to Border dwellers than they are to those in the Outer Hebrides. As Liz Lochhead says, Scottish city dwellers often feel at a disconnect from those in more isolated areas, feeling they have more in common with Northern English city dialects than with ‘people from a Scottish small town in the Borders or Western Isles, or Highlands’.<sup>46</sup> Looking at writers’ motivations in picking specific dialects, it seems most logical therefore to group Scots dialects under two separate headings here: firstly, those we can classify as ‘rural’ dialects (including Doric, Ayrshire, Lowlands and Shetland, among others), and those we see as ‘urban’ (including various Glaswegian and Edinburgh dialects).

### **i. Writing in Rural Dialects**

As a general rule, playwrights writing in rural Scots are far thinner on the ground than those choosing to write in urban dialects. For reasons I will explain later, I personally prefer to use Glaswegian dialect, rarely using the rural Ayrshire part of my dialect, and I am by no means alone in that omission. As Stuart Cosgrove rightly argues, the ‘industrial backdrop’ of urban Scots ‘dominates [the Scottish] cultural landscape’.<sup>47</sup> Nevertheless, some playwrights do choose to write in Doric and Ayrshire dialects and to write in the dialects of the Highlands and Lowlands, and it is therefore important to look to some degree at the reasons behind their decision. As I have discussed previously, there are playwrights for whom it may be a simple choice of ‘writing what you know’, but there are other more intriguing reasons why Scotland’s rural accents make it to the stage.

In Scots literature, rural Scots dialects commonly have a strong association with traditional countryside and coastal ways of life. As Corbett says, Doric in particular is most commonly used in Scots literature to portray ‘themes

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<sup>46</sup> Lochhead, speaking to Brown (1984, no pagination).

<sup>47</sup> Cosgrove, interviewed in Martin (2005). Cosgrove also goes on to point out that this fact makes little sense, considering that only a small percentage of Scotland’s population live in its cities. This is thoroughly true: as of 2011, according to the National Records of Scotland (2011), Scotland has a population of 5.2 million, but Glasgow and Edinburgh (the main centres of urban Scots dialect) have only just over a million inhabitants collectively, and Scotland’s other four cities (Aberdeen, Dundee, Inverness and Stirling) together have less than 500,000. A discussion of why fewer writers appear to come from rural Scotland, however, would take up more space than is available to me here.

involving fishing and farming – traditional north east industries’ (1997, p11). The most iconic example perhaps is Lewis Grassie Gibbon’s *A Scots Quair* (1946); a trilogy written entirely in Doric, centring on the life and struggles of a farming family in Kincardineshire.<sup>48</sup> Literature in rural dialects often returns to a ‘back to the land’ feel, shying away from modern industry and romanticising simple countryside living.<sup>49</sup> In its most extreme form, such literature is known as ‘kailyard’ fiction, and is widely disparaged for its unrealistic depiction of Scotland. Pattie, not mincing his words, refers to it as ‘glutinous sentimentalisation of Scottish rural life, serving to trap the nation’s culture in a cycle of pre-industrial infancy’ (2000, p2). Nevertheless, when it comes to literature in rural dialects, traditional ways of life are often at the forefront.

The same is frequently true of plays written in rural Scots dialects. Playwright George Mackay Brown – writer of *A Spell for Green Corn* (1970) among others – was known for writing about, and in the rural dialect of, Orkney. In interview with Isobel Murray, he noted that his choice as a playwright was about ‘reminding [his audience] of the first essential things and the four elements.’<sup>50</sup> Mackay Brown also agreed with Murray that Orkney and Orcadian dialect were a ‘symbol of a kind of basic simplicities and realities’.<sup>51</sup> Another pertinent example is Sue Glover’s hugely popular *Bondagers* (1991), written in rural Lowland dialect to tell the story of the women employed as farm workers in Nineteenth Century Borders Scotland. Glover’s play is a work that is, as the National Library of Scotland puts it, designed to ‘make ‘townie’ audiences feel the rhythm of the land’.<sup>52</sup> For some playwrights then, the choice to write in Scottish rural dialects can be about a ‘back to the land’ desire; about returning to traditional values that are perhaps lost in urban life.

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<sup>48</sup> A former county, now a part of wider Aberdeenshire.

<sup>49</sup> This is not to say that rural areas of Scotland necessarily act this way in real life: Aberdeen, where Doric thrives, is Scotland’s third largest city, with many of the same urban issues as Glasgow and Edinburgh. Furthermore, a significant part of Aberdeenshire is employed in the North Sea oil industry – an industry that seems to completely contradict previously mentioned traditional agricultural values.

<sup>50</sup> Mackay Brown, interviewed in Murray and Tait (1996b, p43).

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, p43.

<sup>52</sup> National Library of Scotland, 2010a, no pagination.

I would suggest, however, that it is now somewhat dated to claim that any Scottish playwright only chooses rural dialects when they want represent traditional countryside themes. To put it simply, rural dialects are not just ‘the language of country bumpkins’<sup>53</sup>: rural inhabitants have more in common now with urban dwellers than such a view would lead us to believe. With globalisation, with the advent of modern travel and industrialisation, rural parts of Scotland are no longer as isolated; no longer as remote from Scotland’s cities as they used to be. Even the most obscure local communities of the Highlands and Islands are more accessible. As Chapman and Shucksmith point out, the knock-on effect of this is that rural living has begun to exhibit ‘perceived urban values and lifestyles’ (1996, p72). Crime and vandalism, for instance, are problems ‘associated with urban life’, but which are on the increase in rural Scotland (ibid, p72). Moreover, as Macaskill reports, many parts of rural Scotland now suffer from the same problems as urban areas when it comes to unemployment, reliance on industrial jobs, and economic instability (2012, p13).<sup>54</sup> With this in mind, we ought not to immediately assume that rural dialects must represent farming and fishing.

Indeed, this is reflected in the choices of modern playwrights. Gregory Burke, for instance, opted to write his debut play *Gagarin Way* (2001) in the dialect of Fife, as we can see here:

*EDDIE It’s nothing tay day way kleptomania. (Beat.) Oh no, all Genet’s doing is ... choosing tay be the thief that every cunt’s been saying he was since he started nicking things when he was a bairn.*<sup>55</sup>

The use of ‘bairn’ here to mean ‘child’ is indicative of the Fife dialect that features strongly throughout the text: moved to say the same sentence, Central Belt urban Scots, for instance, would use ‘when he was a wean’ or ‘when he was a wee yin’. It is important to note that the Fife dialect comes from an area with a strong

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<sup>53</sup> Corbett, 1997, p13.

<sup>54</sup> For more on the urbanisation and development of modern rural Scotland, see Burnett (2001) and Keating and Stevenson (2006) as a starting point.

<sup>55</sup> Burke, 2001, p6.

presence of fishing communities, as is reflected in its literature. Burke, however, uses the rural Fife dialect to create a play about workers in a computer factory in Lumphinnans. In doing so, he demonstrates the fact that rural dialects are as relevant to plays about industry and globalisation as they are to plays about farming and fishing. I would posit therefore that Scottish playwrights do not have to write off rural dialects as irrelevant to modern Scotland.

There are those, including Edwin Morgan (1992, p.xi), who argue that rural Scots dialects are the most suitable choice when writing Scottish historical plays. It is easy to see where such an argument stems from: urban Scots dialects, like their urban surroundings, are a relatively recent development in the history of Scotland, whereas rural dialects have much more basis in older variations of the country's language. It is likely that if we were to listen to the speech of the Jacobites or of the crofters in the Highland Clearances, it would bear more resemblance to a rural dialect than a modern urban one. There are certainly playwrights who do still choose a rural dialect for preference (and perhaps authenticity) when writing historical work: the previously mentioned *Bondagers* by Sue Glover (1991), based on real bondagers of the Nineteenth Century, is a fine example.

However, it is clear that Scots playwrights have moved on from this default choice now, and to a great extent, this motivation is no longer relevant. One of modern Scotland's greatest theatrical hits is Donald Campbell's *The Jesuit* (1976): a true story about a Catholic priest executed in 1615. Throughout the play, Campbell notoriously had the soldiers and guards speak in 'anachronistic' urban Edinburgh slang (Lenz, 2000, p7). As the National Library of Scotland puts it, they spoke the 'language of the Edinburgh football terraces'.<sup>56</sup> Such a style was by no means uncommon even at the time of writing - *The Jesuit* was accompanied by similarly urban historical treatments in Hector MacMillan's *The Rising* (1973) and Ian Brown's *Mary* (1977), as Findlay (1992, p11) notes. We might look at the surprisingly brusque and urban pronunciation of John Knox's character in *Mary*, as an example:

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<sup>56</sup> National Library of Scotland, 2010b, no pagination.



KNOX Let us pray. Bow yer heids. Come on, I'm no here te waste ma time.<sup>57</sup>

Even today, such examples are not hard to find: in Stuart Thomas' *Damn'd Jacobite Bitches* (2002) we find modern day urban Scottish voices retelling the Jacobites' history, wherein Flora MacDonald (the woman who escorted Bonnie Prince Charlie to Skye and saved his life) expresses that she did it for 'Fame! Biscuit tins!'.<sup>58</sup> Given the evidence, it appears that whilst some playwrights choose rural dialects for historical plays, the motivation is no longer as strong as it once was – urban dialects have been shown to be as effective in this area.

It is interesting to note here that there are also some playwrights opting to write in their rural dialect to order to perpetuate small theatre communities. A prime example of this is found in Shetland. Shetland dialect - described by Corbett (1997, p12) as 'the most exotic bloom in the Scots garden' - is in many ways distinct from mainland dialects, although it still bears more in common with other rural dialects than urban ones.<sup>59</sup> As a result of its distinctive sounds, Shetland theatre is generally run solely for Shetlanders. Even the National Theatre of Scotland's *Ignition* – a six-month-long Shetland project, culminating in a play performance in March 2013 – never left the islands, seemingly only ever intending to cherish stories and voices within the community. As Isobel Murray and George Mackay Brown observe, some Shetland playwrights write in their dialect out of respect for keeping their culture alive, but they already know that their readership and target audiences are substantially diminished by that choice.<sup>60</sup> For some rural playwrights, the choice of a dialect is about ensuring the survival of their words and culture: in a sense, the choice of Shetland writers is a microcosmic example of the argument made earlier, that Scots playwrights

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<sup>57</sup> Brown, 1977, p221.

<sup>58</sup> As quoted in Bye, 2002.

<sup>59</sup> As Sundkvist (2011) argues, the dialect is similar to other rural dialects in many respects, but retains various idiosyncrasies: the use of the perfective 'be' in "I'm never gone to Shetland before", and the use of 'as' instead of 'than' in "I ran that race quicker as I thought I could", for example.

<sup>60</sup> Murray and Mackay Brown talking in Murray and Tait (1996b, p25).

choose to write in Scots to protect their lexicon, as well as their community and culture.

## **ii. Writing in Urban Dialects**

### **a) Urban as Authentically Scottish**

As a predominantly urban Scots writer, the motivation for choosing an urban dialect is of particular interest to me, but identifying a writer's motivation for writing in an urban Scots dialect can be a complex thing, motivated by a variety of factors. In my own writing, the choice is often at least in part motivated by a sense of wanting to be accepted by other Scottish writers, despite - or perhaps because of - living in England. The feeling I have is that the more Glaswegian I am, the more authentically Scottish I am: a feeling shared by many other urban Scottish writers, as I will discuss. The transition from my first PhD play *Filthy Little Explosions* (2012a) to my second *Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic Too* (2013) involved a huge jump in the level of dialect, from predominantly Standard Scottish English to predominantly strong East-end Glaswegian, and much of it was based on this motivating factor.

It is widely acknowledged, by writers and academics alike, that to write in an urban dialect – especially Glaswegian or Edinburgh – is somehow perceived as more authentically Scottish. The sentiment is particularly surprising, given that as recently as the 1970s, even advocates of Scots dialects were calling Glasgow-Scots 'impure' and lacking in 'literary potential' (Findlay, 1992, p9). However, both Findlay (ibid, p9) and Morgan (1983, p199) also cite the 1970s as the decade when the tables began to turn; when urban (and particularly Western) Scots began to dominate the Scottish theatre scene, with plays like *Willie Rough* by Bill Bryden (1972) and Hector MacMillan's *The Sash* (1974). Today, as Corbett rightly says, urban Scots is 'held up to be representative of contemporary Scots' (1997, p13). Indeed, I would go further, to say it is held up to be representative

to the exclusion of rural Scots.<sup>61</sup> One might think that being Scottish is a binary state – you either are or you are not – but as playwright Stewart Conn says, ‘there seems to be a retrenching of [writers’] attitude, which suggests that it is less Scottish somehow to use the English that is natural of the Lowland Scot than to use Glaswegian Scots.’<sup>62</sup>

Again, an odd notion of peer pressure seems to niggle its way into the playwright’s choice. To a certain degree, this feeling impacted on my own writing over the course of my PhD: whilst I was writing in a Glaswegian dialect anyway, I still felt obliged to ‘up the ante’; to purposefully revert to the stronger Glaswegian of my childhood, rather than the diluted version I speak now, after seven years in England, or even the Ayrshire-diluted version I spoke as a child. I felt that if I didn’t – if I wrote in my current watered-down dialect – then I would risk Scottish theatres rejecting the work as unrepresentative of my country; a particularly troubling concept if, at the same time, English theatres would reject the same work as too Scottish.

### **b) Urban Dialect as a Class Issue**

Class association is another major part of the writer’s decision to choose an urban Scots dialect. In fact, in *Filthy Little Explosions* (2012a), class was the dominant motivation for the urban dialects I chose: Olly’s Standard Scottish English and Stef’s East-end Glaswegian were tied to their respective middle class and working class upbringings. As Matheson and Matheson rightly argue, in the United Kingdom, our mode of speech often makes an impact on how others perceive our socio-economic status, and this is unarguably the case in Scotland (2000, p14). As a general rule, as Corbett argues, the further you move into the

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<sup>61</sup> There is no room here for a full discussion of exactly why this is, and indeed, there seems only to be general speculation among academics as to exactly why Urban Scots is generally thought of as more Scottish. Speculation is largely centred on the density of population in the cities and Central Belt, and the fact that Glasgow and Edinburgh are Scotland’s main public faces in commerce and tourism. The situation is also surely encouraged by vociferous support from well-known writers, including Edwin Morgan – Scottish National Poet (Makar) from 2004-2010 – who told language traditionalists that rural dialects were ‘impoverished’, whilst urban dialects were ‘thriving and inventive’. (Morgan, 1983, p195).

<sup>62</sup> Conn, talking to Brown (1984, p48).

middle and upper classes, the more the Scottish dialect becomes 'like its English cousin'; the more it becomes Standard Scottish English (1997, p33).<sup>63</sup> In contrast, Scots spoken 'in its urban forms, is the language of the working class' (Matheson and Matheson, 2000, p14).

If the playwright's aim then is to write a play about modern working class city issues, and they have already opted to write in Scots, then a strong urban dialect is the most pertinent option<sup>64</sup>, and this was my choice in *Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic Too* (2013), given Mo and Ally's working class background. Two of Scotland's most perennially successful plays also fall into this working class dialect heading: John Byrne's *The Slab Boys* (1978), and Tony Roper's *The Steamie* (1988). The former portrays life as an underpaid slab room worker in a Glasgow carpet factory, while the latter portrays a group of Glaswegian working class women in a public washhouse.

In fact, today, this trend of Scottish literature - including plays - written in working class urban dialects about significant urban problems, has become so popular that many argue it constitutes a large part of Scottish culture as a whole. As literary agent Jenny Brown said at a Scots literature conference in 2011, Scottish writing is frequently 'marked out by introspection, an experimental use of Scots, and a setting in areas of deprivation.'<sup>65</sup> London critic Sierz points out that Irvine Welsh's cult classic *Trainspotting* (1993)<sup>66</sup> 'has a lot to answer for' in this respect<sup>67</sup>, but I would submit that, although *Trainspotting* may have been influential, this kind of literature has been popular in Scotland for much longer. Stevenson (2001, p3) dates the beginning of its major influence on Scottish plays in the 1920s, with Joe Corrie's *In Time o' Strife* (1928). Stevenson (2001, p3) continues on to note a similar vein running right through the 1930s and 40s,

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<sup>63</sup> As mentioned earlier, SSE is widely acknowledged as being only slightly colloquial – a slightly Scottish proper English that is 'understandable in all parts of the English speaking world' (Corbett, 1997, p18).

<sup>64</sup> While there are examples, as mentioned, of rural historical plays written in anachronistic urban dialects, it is interesting to note that the reverse is not so true: there are few, if any, successful plays written in Doric about gangland Glasgow, for instance.

<sup>65</sup> Brown, quoted in Hutchison (2011, p28).

<sup>66</sup> As well as its equally successful film adaptation, directed by Danny Boyle (1996) and its stage version, adapted by Harry Gibson (2001).

<sup>67</sup> Sierz, 2005, no pagination.

with major work from Robert McLeish with *The Gorbals Story* (1946) and from Ena Lamont Stewart with the iconic *Men Should Weep* (1947), among others. Moreover, predating the publication of *Trainspotting* by five years, there is an apt tongue-in-cheek quotation from John McKay's 1988 play *Dead Dad Dog* (itself a part of the genre in some ways, although more comedic than some):

ECK Aye it's dark and dingy. And that's the whole point. This is where I come to do what Scots are best at.

WILLIE Shinty?

ECK Moping. It's a need we've got. And we're experts.<sup>68</sup>

This kind of unhappy urban realism is a recognisable part of Scottish literature - and perhaps, speculates McDevitt, a 'part of the national psyche'<sup>69</sup> - and if a Scots writer aims to contribute to this genre, then in all likelihood, their writing mode of choice will be an urban dialect.

### **c) Urban Dialect and Specifically Urban Issues**

As a final point on the idea of urban dialects and urban realism, I would argue that there are specific issues in Scotland today whose representation necessitate an urban dialect, and particularly a Western/Glaswegian one. My personal choice of dialect in playwriting is often based on the feeling that my plays are specifically Glaswegian in their issues, and therefore should be specifically Glaswegian in their dialect. Like other plays of its type, this applied particularly to *Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic Too* (2013) – a two-hander centred around sectarianism in Glasgow. The play focused on the now largely football-centric divide between Protestants and Catholics; a divide which frequently gives way to serious violence, and which I felt I had to address in Glaswegian dialect.

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<sup>68</sup> McKay, 1988, p162.

<sup>69</sup> Head of *Hodder Headline Scotland*, Bob McDevitt, talking to Kirsty Scott (2004).

Given frequent national press coverage of the issue, it would be easy to assume that sectarianism is rife in Scotland.<sup>70</sup> Academics have hardly helped the issue; T.M. Devine's highly successful book *Scotland's Shame* (2000) – including James MacMillan's groundbreaking speech of the same name, and corresponding academic responses - seems to leave readers in no doubt that sectarianism is wide-spread across the country, and belongs to all of Scotland. In actual fact, though, such conclusions are hugely misguided: sectarianism in Scotland is a problem specific to the Central Belt, and applies mostly to Glasgow. In the 1800s, thousands of Irish Catholics emigrated to Glasgow (and to some small extent, Edinburgh and Dundee), looking for work and housing. In North East Scotland, however, there was very little in the way of either heavy industrial work or coal-mining districts, so prospects were unattractive for immigrants, and very few of them went so far north. In so far as there is any Catholic presence in North East Scotland, therefore, it stems from native Scottish Catholics in Aberdeenshire, Banffshire, and Invernesshire, and there is no dispute between them and Scottish Protestants (Styles, 2000, p117). This difference is illustrated clearly by Scottish football: a strong Irish Catholic/Protestant divide exists between Celtic and Rangers, and in a far less violent way between Hibs and Hearts in Edinburgh, and between Dundee United and Dundee. Aberdeen, on the other hand, had no Protestant-Catholic rivalry to speak of, and correspondingly has only one football team: Aberdeen F.C.

When writing theatre about sectarianism in Scotland, therefore, it would be hugely misrepresentative to set it above the Central Belt. More than that, however, the sectarian language that characterises the conflict has become very much a part of the Glasgow vernacular. An urban dialect is essential, I would argue, because the same language doesn't exist in common usage further north. Sectarianism is a popular subject in Scottish playwriting, and writers always address the issue in urban Glasgow dialects, from Hector MacMillan's *The Sash* (1974) - named for one of the most controversial Protestant sectarian songs,

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<sup>70</sup> For more discussion of the history of sectarianism in Scotland, see Devine (1999), Devine (2000), and MacMillan (2000). For more on whether sectarianism still exists as a problem today, see Walls and Williams (2003), and Bruce, Glendinning, Paterson and Rosie (2005) among others.

'The Sash My Father Wore' - to Des Dillon's *Singing I'm No a Billy, He's a Tim* (2008). The latter revolves around a Celtic fan and a Rangers fan thrown into the same prison cell and forced to talk to each other, and the play is written in Dillon's own Coatbridge dialect. The particular words the characters use are absolutely essential to the play's effect:

BILLY What word?

TIM Oul. Ye sayed *oul* cars. Ye got done for ringin *oul* cars.

BILLY And that should interest me because?

TIM Because – it's only Irish immigrants that use that word.

BILLY Are you sayin I'm a fuckin tattie howker?

TIM Aye. (*chants*) Fenian. Fenian.<sup>71</sup>

The use of Glaswegian dialect here – making the point that even the most ardent Protestant Rangers supporters have incorporated elements of Irish Catholic dialect into their own – is absolutely vital. So too are the casual sectarian names so common in Glasgow slang: 'tattie howker', 'Fenian', 'Billy' and 'Tim' are just some of the offensive names well-known to most Glaswegians. This was a key point for me in writing *Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic too* (2013). Written about two brothers raised in a strongly Protestant household, the banter of Rangers and Celtic supporters was an undeniably integral part of the play, and an urban Glasgow dialect was key to my portrayal of the situation: a rural dialect could not have accessed the same deep-seated rivalries.

## V. Problems with Scottish Dialect Plays in Writing

Having spoken about why a writer might choose to write in Scots, and from there, why they select a particular dialect, it stands to reason now to examine the process of writing a Scots dialect play, and the obstacles that can arise therein. That is to say, we ought to look at specific Scottish dialect writers' obstacles, not generally encountered to the same extent by other playwrights. Much of this is

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<sup>71</sup> Dillon, 2008, p46.

written with particular relevance to my own PhD plays, written predominantly in urban Glasgow dialect, but can be applied for the most part to rural dialects too.

### **i. Unified Spelling**

In my experience, one of the most difficult hurdles in both writing and reading a Scots dialect play is how the words are spelled. This may seem a very elementary problem – for any professional writer, a basic grasp of spelling is obviously useful – but Scots dialects, lacking the status of an official language, have no official unified spelling. Added to this, dialect variation across Scotland is considerable, as previously discussed, and two Scots dialects may pronounce the same sentence very differently, leading to a lack of agreed spelling, or in many cases, even agreed grammar. As Matheson and Matheson rightly say, ‘What most Scots cannot do is to write their language. The lack of a consistent orthography does not help’ (2000, p214). In essence, every Scottish writer who comes to put pen to paper has to take their spoken language and invent a spelling for those words, or else pick their preferred choice of spelling from a very wide selection of previous examples. Taking the Scottish pronunciation of ‘going to’ as an example, we can easily find a variety of spellings: ‘goanny’ in Dillon’s *I’m No A Billy, He’s a Tim* (2008, p9); ‘gonnay’ in Burke’s *Black Watch* (2007, p5); and ‘gonnae’ in Harrower’s *Ciara* (2013, p50). This is by no means an exhaustive list of possible spellings, which illustrates the problem, considering that the phrase in question is a relatively short and simple example. As a Scots playwright trying to write a fairly common phrase, it fell to me to choose which spelling would do justice to how I wanted the word to be pronounced: a less than ideal process for a number of reasons, as I detail later.

There have been some attempts to introduce an official orthography which would aid Scottish writers. As discussed earlier, proponents of Lallans have tried to rectify our lack of agreed spelling by introducing an official written language, but to no success: Lallans has simply not been popular enough to make an impact on our collective spelling. Certainly, I myself would never look to Lallans for



playwriting advice: the spellings are artificially imposed and frequently antiquated. Moreover, because of Lallans' status as a purely written language, the lexicon includes plenty of reintroduced, obsolete words, and at the same time curiously omits many that are now used in daily conversation. It would be useless to look to Lallans for the spellings of many modern urban Glaswegian words, for example. Similarly, there have been attempts by academics to define precisely and officially what constitutes correct Scottish spelling, but again, these attempts have been unsuccessful and are thus unhelpful as writing aids. As Conn puts it, these debates have been ultimately fruitless attempts at 'imposing uniformity on something multifarious'.<sup>72</sup> Again, as with Lallans, the attempts have been too arbitrary and artificial: it seems unclear exactly what would qualify any Scot to select and enforce the 'correct' spellings on the rest of the nation, and how exactly those 'correct' spellings would distinguish themselves from the 'wrong' ones.

By way of another solution to the issue, the Scots Language Society tells us that 'Scots tolerates a when o variations'<sup>73</sup> and that if we try to use frequently used spellings where they exist, 'we might get nearer tae a staunnert by consensus.'<sup>74</sup> That seems a difficult thing to accomplish, however, given that the Scots Language Society themselves seem unable to come to a consensus about the spelling of the word 'standard': only a few lines earlier, they ask if it might be possible to reach a 'staundart'.<sup>75</sup> The rest of the sentence is equally tricky: some Scots writers would be moved to write 'git' rather than 'get', for example, and others would dispute the pronunciation of 'ch' in 'might'. In my own writing process, using frequently used spellings seemed to be particularly unhelpful advice: if major Scottish playwrights Dillon, Burke and Harrower all use different spellings of the same word to create widely circulated plays, it seems unclear how I should fathom which of the three is the most frequently-used, without some kind of thorough linguistic and literary investigation into the word. Furthermore, it would seem that every time I attempt to write a relatively

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<sup>72</sup> Conn, talking to Brown (1984, p48).

<sup>73</sup> 'When' – a good number of.

<sup>74</sup> Scots Language Society, 2012b, no pagination.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, no pagination.

uncommon Scottish word, I am obligated to search through all other Scottish literature to try to establish whether a consensus already exists. The process is of course possible, but obviously far from ideal as part of a creative project.

This lack of clarity can constitute a significant problem in the writing process for playwrights using Scottish dialects. It is easy to see how it might create a break in the flow of writing, if one has to continuously stop to contemplate whether or not a fairly simple word is spelled in a way that others will agree with, or understand. This was certainly my own experience when writing *Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic too* (2013). As an example, there was one particular word that completely jarred my writing on several occasions, because I found myself stopping to consider the spelling whenever I tried to use it:

ALLY Hie, this is the most important match of our fuckin lives. I'll sing what I want.<sup>76</sup>

The word 'hie' is a Glaswegian exclamation, usually used to get someone's attention, and it roughly translates as 'oi'; a 'come here, you; listen to me' sentiment. It is pronounced, however, like the diphthong [ai] sound in 'might' and 'kite'. Both 'hi' and 'high' already come with obvious connotations in the English language, however, and I wanted to make sure the exclamation was not mistaken for another word. It seemed impossible to spell what I meant in a recognisable way, without resorting to spelling it in the International Phonetic Alphabet. My writing was often unintentionally put on hold while I attempted to find a way to resolve the issue, and in fact, I was never satisfied with this spelling, but I felt I had to settle on something, if only to be able to focus on my dialogue.

The most common advice here is that writers should simply write freely in their first draft, and correct it later, to avoid this problem. As playwright James Graham says in interview at the National Theatre, 'Allow yourself the right to be really, really crap for the first draft, and know that all first drafts aren't

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<sup>76</sup> Hamilton, 2013, p2.

brilliant'.<sup>77</sup> In fact, some Scottish writers even go so far as to say spelling out the words in a second draft brings out the passion and spark in their play: radical playwright Tom McGrath believed that 'writing the life into the thing coincides with moving into phonetic spellings of the words'.<sup>78</sup> I would say, however, that this was not a particularly helpful tactic in my writing process: my own method has always involved a thorough check of wording, spelling and grammar as I write, and I feel uncomfortable leaving it until a later draft, so working on precise Scottish spelling in the first draft remains challenging for me.

Whether the playwright finds it difficult or not, however, the lack of unified spelling can become an issue later in the process, when actors or readers are expected to read the words with the pronunciation the author intended, with whatever spelling the author has elected to give the word. As Isobel Murray argues, it is often difficult and 'off-putting' to read phonetically-spelled Scots dialect, 'because we are so habituated to standard English as the thing we read' (1996a, p138). Moreover, this situation is not helped by the lack of consistent spelling between writers: as Macaulay says, 'too many variant spellings occur... and they do reduce readability', when slightly different spellings of the same word - for example, 'g'nna' and 'gunnah' (both being yet more different spellings of 'going to') - seem to imply pronunciation differences, but none are intended (1991, p285). This process of reading phonetically is made even more difficult if we consider that the actor or reader, particularly if they are not Scottish, may not even know the words if they were read to them aloud. This had a definite impact on my writing process in early drafts of *Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic Too* (2013), when an English fellow PhD student expressed to me that he could not read or understand the work and 'really had to look at the context' of many of the words I thought were relatively straightforward phonetic spellings, including 'staun' (stand) and 'feshed' (fussed).<sup>79</sup> This was difficult and somewhat demoralising feedback for me to hear: to request feedback on what I considered as a polished draft, and consequently be told that the proof-reader does not understand the basic words I had used, never mind the play itself, was a

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<sup>77</sup> Interview with Graham, 2011.

<sup>78</sup> McGrath talking to Brown, 1984, p48.

<sup>79</sup> See Midgley, 2013.

considerable knock to my confidence. At some stages I considered whether writing in dialect was simply more hassle than it was worth, if no-one could read it.

By way of a possible solution, Macaulay rightly points out that English orthography lends itself well to a wide variety of regional pronunciations, and Scots will simply read standard English aloud in their own dialect anyway (1991, p280). Corbett confirms with his example: a Scot 'if moved to read it aloud' may pronounce the word 'use' as 'yaise', regardless of what is written on the page (1997, p50). There is perhaps some argument here then that, if you want to make your script accessible but still want it to be in Scottish dialect, then you ought in the first instance to simply translate your spoken dialect into standard written English – or into standard Scottish English if you want to include occasional Scots words and grammar – and simply indicate in the stage directions that the script should be read in a particular accent. This is the tactic taken by Catherine Czerkawska with her play *Wormwood* (1997), written in Standard Scottish English and specifying at the beginning that 'it would be suitable if all the characters spoke with Scots accents, rather than assuming some kind of RP... But above all they should not sound too English.'<sup>80</sup>

However, speaking personally as a Scottish playwright in England, this solution only works if the writer is working with either a completely native Scots cast or a cast with excellent dialect training, or else is not particularly precious about how Scottish they want their play to be. After all, as Macaulay goes on to say, a reader (or indeed an actor) can only read standard English in a specified dialect if they already know the dialect and all its individual pronunciation rules: 'the attempt is unlikely to be successful if the reader is unfamiliar with the dialect' (1991, p280). This applied particularly to my workshopping experience of *Filthy Little Explosions* (2012a). Although I wanted the character Stef to have a strong East-end Glasgow accent, I wrote much of his speech in Standard Scottish English to avoid spelling and comprehension issues. In the workshop, the actors performed well, but being English and unfamiliar with Eastern Glasgow dialect, they

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<sup>80</sup> Czerkawska, 1997, p2.

obviously couldn't replicate the accent I had imagined, for the same reason Macaulay argues, and so my play in performance was vastly different from the voices I had heard as I wrote.

You might also go further in the opposite direction, taking your chosen Scots dialect and spelling it out meticulously, dropping every letter that Scots speakers drop in daily speech, as well as adding letters and blending words (or whole sentences), in order to specify exactly how you want a line to be said. There have been occasions when I found this tactic useful, especially in writing *Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic Too* (2013):

MO It was almost kinofa comfort. Some things don't change.<sup>81</sup>

Whenever I used the phrase 'kind of a', I wanted to make it clear that the Glaswegian way of saying it would not distinguish between words, blending the three together into one sound. Such a spelling felt the most appropriate way to signal this. Having said that, I only ever used this method sparsely, given the comprehension problems it can cause when used more extensively. The following extract by Scottish poet Tom Leonard is a fine example of this kind of complex orthography, as well as describing the process behind it:

Yiwrite doon a wurd, nyi saytiyirsell, that's no thi waya sayit. Nif yi trytiwrite it doon thi way yi say it, yi end up wi thi page covered in letters stuck thigithir, nwee dots above hof thi letters, in fact yi end up wi wanna they thingz yi needti huv took a course in phonetics ti be able ti read.<sup>82</sup>

Read aloud slowly, this extract may become clearer, and is certainly explicit about how to say phrases. 'Nyi' is indeed an accurate representation of how a

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<sup>81</sup> Hamilton, 2013, p13.

<sup>82</sup> Leonard, 1984, p73. 'You write down a word, and you say to yourself, that's no the way I say it. And if you try to write it down the way you say it, you end up with the page covered in letters stuck together, and wee dots above half the letters, in fact you end up with one of they things you need to have took a course in phonetics to be able to read.'

Glaswegian would pronounce the phrase 'and you'. Some parts may prove harder however: 'wanna' should be pronounced here with a short A sound [æ] - as in 'ran' - and means 'one of', rather than the modern colloquial English usage 'wanna' which is pronounced with an open O sound [o:] - as in 'pawn' - and means 'want to'. As Leonard himself says in the extract, it is incredibly difficult to read the text without a 'course in phonetics'. Furthermore, such precise spelling may be seen as being over-prescriptive for the actor/reader.

## ii. Profanity

Another of the significant hurdles for a Scots writer is deciding how much to allow profanity into their characters' speech. In much of urban Glasgow, and certainly in the youth population of the urban Southside where I was raised, swearing has become such a part of daily life that the words in question seem to have lost all meaning for their users, as perhaps with many modern dialects. The word 'fuck', for example, is used as a catch-all term: as a verb, a noun, a verbal tic, or even as a strange form of imagery, as in the commonly used phrase 'run like fuck'. As Scott says, in modern urban Scotland, 'profanity is as prevalent as punctuation'.<sup>83</sup> Glaswegian novelist and playwright James Kelman adequately sums up the situation in his experience of his home town: 'I was in my 20s before I even realised the word 'fuck' had to do with a sexual act for some people. It was never used in that way for myself, and none of my community used it in that way.'<sup>84</sup>

In order to represent urban life and speech accurately, therefore, many playwrights (and Scottish writers in general) feel their characters should swear in a similar fashion. My own feeling, certainly, is that profanity is what would come naturally to my characters in both *Filthy Little Explosions* (2012a) and *Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic Too* (2013): to edit it out would be to misrepresent my urban dialect. In fact, in another of my plays, *for fierce confusion, peace* (2012b), I felt obliged to censor a Glaswegian soldier's language

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<sup>83</sup> Scott, 2004, no pagination.

<sup>84</sup> Kelman, talking to Aitkenhead, 2012, no pagination.

to make it appropriate for a youth theatre cast, but having edited out the profanity, his language seemed totally stilted and false to my ears. Kelman is an obvious example of a Scottish writer with a similar persuasion: the author insists on writing both his plays and his novels with characters who swear as easily as breathing, because it is 'just how people talk' in real life, and anything else would be a false representation.<sup>85</sup> Examples of this kind of work are endless, but Mike Cullen's *The Cut* (1994) is particularly notable here too, providing as it did a 'document of Scottish working class culture'<sup>86</sup> in its foul language:

MCGEE See? Fuck, see what I'm.... you get the truth, you  
dinnae want tae *hear* it.

SALTER Why should I believe you?

MCGEE Cos it's the bastarding truth.<sup>87</sup>

Many writers, like myself, see this as the only way to be true to their dialect, and sometimes this approach does pay off: Gregory Burke's critically acclaimed *Black Watch* (2007) was praised by, among others, *The Observer's* David Smith, who said the play successfully portrayed Scots dialect in its 'colloquial, profanity-peppered, matter-of-fact glory'.<sup>88</sup>

The worry, however, is that when such works leave the author's desk, and reach publishers, editors, readers and audience, this use of profanity will become a mark against the work and the author. This was certainly my worry when I decided to represent this element of urban Glaswegian speech in the dialogue between Ally and Mo in *Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic Too* (2013), as well as in the language of working class Stef in *Filthy Little Explosions* (2012a). Looking at those who have been criticised, James Kelman again springs obviously to mind: when he won the Booker Prize with *how late it was, how late* (1995) Kelman was lambasted by some of the judges for what they deemed an unnecessary level of

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<sup>85</sup> Kelman, talking to Aitkenhead, 2012, no pagination.

<sup>86</sup> Wilson, 1994, no pagination.

<sup>87</sup> Cullen, 1994, p44.

<sup>88</sup> Smith, 2008, no pagination.

swearing, and what they saw as a 'disgrace' to the prize.<sup>89</sup> Despite winning a prestigious award, the subsequent uproar had a knock-on effect for Kelman's future success: the fury was such that the Scottish Arts Council were unable to assist Kelman in publishing his next work, for instance.<sup>90</sup> More to the point, however, as Matheson and Matheson point out, many of the book's critics looked at the combination of Glasgow spelling and frequent swearing, and branded Kelman – Booker Prize winner – as completely 'illiterate' (2000, p218). As with this example, the use of swearing in urban Glasgow dialects often leads critics to slam writers who are simply trying to represent the reality of their culture.

This problem also extends to playwrights, whose take on urban dialect is often completely misinterpreted. Iain Heggie, for example, was dismissed as an 'angry writer' by critics, solely because of the extensive swearing – rather than any actual review of the plot content – of his play, *A Wholly Healthy Glasgow*, at the Manchester Royal Exchange (Heggie, 2003, p.ix). We can also look at the National Theatre of Scotland's new urban Scottish dialect adaptation of *Peer Gynt*, by Colin Teevan (2007). Hugely successful in Scotland, the performance was slated by *The Telegraph's* Charles Spencer when it played at the Barbican, for failing to 'use swear words with anything like the wit or eloquence of Pinter or Mamet. They are liberally sprinkled over the surface of the play like hundreds and thousands over a trifle, and make little impact.'<sup>91</sup> In my view, Spencer completely missed the point. Swearing in urban dialect is not *meant* to be funny, eloquent or decorative; that is not the point of representing urban speech. The profanity *is*, on the other hand, meant to be ubiquitous, as it is in Glaswegian every-day speech. This seems to me to be a prime example of a trend described by Winder that an 'impish and good-humoured variety of swearing goes down more easily' than something making an uncompromising point about life, even if both contain the same amount of profanity.<sup>92</sup> Regardless of whether Spencer accurately assessed *Peer Gynt*, however, his attitude – that Scottish dialect playwrights are less eloquent, less articulate - is unfortunately prevalent. Having previously

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<sup>89</sup> Akbar, 2011, no pagination.

<sup>90</sup> Aitkenhead, 2012, no pagination.

<sup>91</sup> Spencer, 2009, no pagination.

<sup>92</sup> Winder, 1994, no pagination.



mentioned the praise given to *Black Watch*, we might also look at comments from Lloyd Evans who wrote in *The Spectator* that his enjoyment of the play was obscured by a ‘blizzard of swearing’ that was just a ‘thuggish’ demonstration of masculinity, with nothing pertinent to say.<sup>93</sup> Profanity is a sensitive issue for many, and of course one may feel obliged to take that into consideration when writing. That said, if you choose to write in an urban Scots dialect where profanity is unarguably common, then I would argue that you may then have to make a choice in the writing process, weighing up the options between truth to your dialect and the risk of being labeled less articulate than your peers.

## **VI. Problems with Scots dialect plays in reception**

Having reviewed the problems a Scots writer might encounter in the writing process – as distinct from those that any other playwright is likely to encounter – I now investigate problems with Scottish dialect plays when they reach the theatre. As a general rule, Scots dialect plays tend to cause little trouble for native Scottish audiences. As Morgan points out, Scots audiences respond very positively to plays in their own words: they ‘seem to get a disproportionate delight from hearing Scots words which they use frequently enough, but which acquire an extra dimension for them when they hear them in the theatre’ (1996, p226). With this in mind, I want to look here specifically at the response from non-Scottish audiences, whose understanding and acceptance of Scots plays can be very different. It should be said, however, that my own experience is slightly different here on some points: I have no easy access to Scottish actors, so my own plays have always been performed without the Scots dialects they were written in. This is of course a problem in its own right for Scots dialect plays, as I discussed with reference to pronunciation issues. On the other hand, it does mean that some of the other problems I will discuss here are eliminated before the play reaches performance: comprehension of accents, for example, is not an issue.

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<sup>93</sup> Evans, 2008, no pagination.

## i. Understanding the play

### a) Dialect

One of the most significant problems for non-Scots audiences is basic understanding. Having previously mentioned the occasional difficulties with *reading* Scots dialect plays, we have to consider that plays are meant to be performed, and performed without any slow repetition of lines the audience did not quite catch. Sometimes the dialect is simply too thick for non-native speakers to understand. This is certainly true in the case of Mike Cullen's *The Cut* (1994), and its coverage in national press, where Scottish and English reviewers for exactly the same newspaper (*The Guardian*) had very different opinions of the play. Like other English critics, Michael Billington, reviewing the play at London's Bush Theatre, was so struck by issues of comprehension that he had to devote an opening paragraph to it: *The Cut*, he said, required 'some getting into', because of the heavy Scots accents and dialect.<sup>94</sup> Native Scots speaker Sue Wilson, on the other hand, reviewed the same production for the same newspaper when it moved to Glasgow's Tramway Theatre less than a month later, and her review had nothing at all to say about the dialect, other than to mention in passing that the cast were 'beautifully articulate'.<sup>95</sup> Ronan O'Donnell's *Brazil* (2003) found itself facing the same treatment, as Michael Billington again opened his review in total bewilderment: 'I am all in favour of writers using their native tongue, but I have to confess that the thick Scottish dialect deployed by Ronan O'Donnell in this hour-long monologue left me seriously baffled.'<sup>96</sup> Scottish journalist Kate Copstick, reviewing for *The Scotsman* at the same performance, had no issue with the language: the Scottish vernacular was full of 'wonderful phrases' and 'little bits of melody'.<sup>97</sup> If reviewers are anything to go by, then it would seem that there is at least some level of difficulty when it comes to non-Scots audiences and basic understanding of Scots dialect plays.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Billington, 1994, no pagination.

<sup>95</sup> Wilson, 1994, no pagination.

<sup>96</sup> Billington, 2003, no pagination.

<sup>97</sup> Copstick, 2003, no pagination.

<sup>98</sup> There are, disappointingly, no obvious efforts to research this theory more fully - to my knowledge, no surveys of non-Scot audiences at Scots dialect plays exist - but given their

As a means of solving this problem, it is periodically suggested that Scots dialect plays might provide their audience with a glossary, so as to bridge any gaps in understanding. Certainly, in his review of Mike Cullen's *The Cut*, Michael Billington was perturbed that the said production did not offer one.<sup>99</sup> This practice is not uncommon: as Shields notes, audiences at non-Scottish theatres were provided with one when they came to see Harry Gibson's acclaimed play adaptation of *Trainspotting* (1995).<sup>100</sup> It is clear, however, that this practice is less than ideal in dense dialect plays: the atmosphere of a play (and one's concentration on it) is bound to be affected somewhat if every few sentences, the audience are frantically flipping pages to try and understand what is being said.

Nonetheless, even if the audience does have a basic level of comprehension of what is being said, there is still a worry that the writer's intentions may be lost on a non-Scots audience. More specifically, this becomes a potential danger if the writer has chosen a particular dialect or part of dialect because of its meaning or symbolism in Scotland: when the play transfers to a non-Scots audience, they may not know what the dialect represents. As Corbett argues, Scottish playwrights use precisely chosen dialects to demonstrate a character's geographical and social identity, and if the audience does not understand where the dialect is from and who would usually speak it, that identity is hard to fathom.<sup>101</sup> If you are not familiar with a Morningside accent, for instance, you might be slower to realise, if it is not explained elsewhere, that the character is likely to originate from middle to upper-class Edinburgh.<sup>102</sup>

In fact, my own experience here has been problematic for similar reasons: if your cast are English and only able to speak in an at-best generic Scottish accent, it

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experience as regular and articulate theatre goers, the fact that reviewers still express difficulty with Scots dialect is indicative of a larger problem.

<sup>99</sup> Billington, 1994, no pagination.

<sup>100</sup> Shields, 1996, no pagination.

<sup>101</sup> Corbett, 1995, no pagination.

<sup>102</sup> In fact, as a case in point, at a press conference for 2012 film *Salmon Fishing in the Yemen*, actor Ewan MacGregor (2012) had to pause in his explanation of why his character had a Morningside accent, so that another Scottish member of the panel could explain to the nonplussed audience exactly what a Morningside accent was, 'for those who live south of the border'.

seems unlikely that they will be able to make the distinction between a Morningside Edinburgh dialect and a Sighthill Edinburgh dialect, which would signify a notable difference in class background. In an early reading of *Filthy Little Explosions* (2012a) at the York Theatre Royal, it was totally lost on the audience that Olly, Becky and Stef were from different parts of Glasgow and thus from different class backgrounds, because the actors were English and all only capable of a kind of loose Scots brogue that said nothing about where the characters were from. The point I wanted to make about Stef struggling to fit into a middle class school was largely missed in the performance.

Understanding the subtleties of an accent is often crucial to the meaning of Scots dialect plays. Take, for example, *The Jesuit* by Donald Campbell (1976). Campbell, as mentioned earlier in this dissertation, had the soldiers of his play speak in broad explicit working-class urban Edinburgh dialect, whilst the churchmen spoken in either English or Standard Scottish English, to make a point about the relationship between religion and education in Scotland. If you are not familiar with the fact that Standard Scottish English is the predominant language of the middle classes, however, the point is lost, and as the National Library of Scotland notes in their records on *The Jesuit*, the production lost this message entirely when it travelled out of Scotland, with Irish audiences entirely missing the message of the dialect choice.<sup>103</sup>

## **b) Humour**

Humour, too, can often find itself lost in translation when Scots dialect scripts leave Scotland. On some occasions, this happens because the playwright's jokes are dependent on a familiarity with dialect grammar and phrases. One example is in a joke from the King's Theatre Scottish production of *Babes in the Wood*<sup>104</sup> in 2001, where Elaine C. Smith exclaims, 'These shoes are giving me sciatica. Sciatica size five, and these are a size three.' The joke – that 'See, I take a size five' sounds like 'Sciatica size five' – demands familiarity with two separate features

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<sup>103</sup> National Library of Scotland, 2010b, no pagination.

<sup>104</sup> Directed by Nigel West (2001).

of Glasgow dialect: firstly, that the pronoun 'I' is usually pronounced 'ah', and secondly, it calls for an awareness of the Scottish 'distinctive discourse feature' of starting new topics by prefacing them with the word 'see', as noted by Corbett (1997, p3).

A great deal of humour in Scottish scripts, as with any humour, is founded on familiarity with the source material – in 'bringing people together by laughing at the things that unite them – and only them'.<sup>105</sup> If you're not a speaker of the dialect, that can have a huge impact on how much you appreciate the play's humour. This gap in understanding does sometimes discourage the playwright from including certain jokes: I often consider whether it might be worth cutting some humour, or explaining it, because I know that a non-Scottish audience will not get the joke, regardless of whether a Scottish audience would. One example is in Mo's monologue on meeting Shiv in *Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic Too* (2013):

*MO AMDG --- Ad Maiora Dei Gloriam. To the greater glory of God.  
She's from the Wallydishes.*<sup>106</sup>

Initially, I intended to leave this line as it stood. 'The Wallydishes' is a well-known short-hand term in Glasgow, used to refer to St Aloysius' College: Independent Jesuit School for Roman Catholics. The term is designed to make fun of the school's overly wordy title and the typical Glaswegian's struggle to pronounce 'Aloysius', as well as making light of the school's status as an exclusive fee-paying school with a difficult entrance exam. However, looking at the text, I knew the reference would be lost on a non-Scots audience, and felt obliged to have Mo explain the school's full name; an explanation that felt unnatural for the character, given that hardly any young Glaswegian from the school's surrounding area would use its actual name.

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<sup>105</sup> Logan, 2011, no pagination.

<sup>106</sup> Hamilton, 2013, p24.

On the other hand, when David Harrower's new play *Ciara* (2013) opened at the Traverse Theatre at the 2013 Edinburgh Fringe, Harrower opted not to explain some of his Glaswegian dialect humour, with mixed results. Harrower was awarded a Fringe First from *The Scotsman*, and returns to the Traverse in December 2013 and to Glasgow's Citizen's Theatre in January 2014, but has interestingly had no London (or indeed English) run thus far. Scottish reviewers loved the play, praising its 'deadly one-liners'<sup>107</sup> and 'wry humour'.<sup>108</sup> For non-Scot reviewers, however, it was rather a different story: as Lyn Gardner rightly comments, English coverage of the play was 'muted' at best.<sup>109</sup> Gardner goes on to say that, because the play is very firmly about Glasgow culture and dialect, non-native speakers have to 'work a little harder' to get the humour.<sup>110</sup> The play certainly made a great deal of jokes that absolutely necessitated an inside knowledge of Glasgow. We can look, for example, at Ciara's response when an unknown fan of her father's asks her where her dad is buried:

*CIARA He's buried in Janefield Cemetery so he can hear the roar from Paradise.<sup>111</sup>*

There are two separate jokes here: the first being that someone might be so committed to a football team that they pick their burial site based on how far it is from their home ground. There is no obvious football reference, however, if you do not know that 'Paradise' features in Glaswegian dialect as Celtic fans' nickname for their home stadium Celtic Park, and that Janefield Cemetery is on the very cusp of Celtic Park's grounds, making the noise from the stadium extremely loud. There is another important side to the humour here, however, requiring a specifically Glaswegian knowledge: Janefield Cemetery is the local Glaswegian name for the Eastern Necropolis, which has not permitted burials since the 1980s, so there is no possible way that Ciara's dad was buried there 'a year and a half ago'<sup>112</sup>; she is deliberately avoiding the man's question, and that

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<sup>107</sup> Cooper, 2013, no pagination.

<sup>108</sup> McMillan, 2013, no pagination.

<sup>109</sup> Gardner, 2013, no pagination.

<sup>110</sup> *ibid*, 2013, no pagination.

<sup>111</sup> Harrower, 2013, p29.

<sup>112</sup> *ibid*, p29.

may not be immediately obvious to a non-Glaswegian reader. Gardner has hit on the real crux of the matter here: the problem across the board with Scots dialect plays is the need to ‘work a little harder’ to get the jokes.<sup>113</sup> In this sense, Scots writers need to give a great deal of consideration to how they create humour in dialect plays. I would say here though that the audience can still find enough of the humour to enjoy it, without necessarily understanding the entirety of the dialect and cultural references. This was certainly true of *Ciara*, where international audiences at an Edinburgh premiere were still extremely receptive to a distinctly Glaswegian play.

## VII. The exclusion of Scottish plays from English theatres

When Scots dialect plays reach English audiences, problems can arise, as I have discussed. However, I would argue that too few Scottish plays reach English audiences to merit a real discussion: such plays are perpetually trapped inside the Scottish border, and effectively barred from English theatres. This applies particularly to the apparently ‘national’ new writing theatres of London.<sup>114</sup> I am not alone in recognising this problem: there is a definite awareness among Scottish playwrights, and Scottish theatre professionals in general, that this is the case. As David Greig says in regard to this argued exclusion, ‘We’re painfully aware that down in the Big Smoke, nobody cares’.<sup>115</sup> Liz Lochhead, too, expresses a similar sentiment: ‘Certainly there’s a cultural interface feeling of being slightly excluded in the south-east of England and not really giving a damn about that.’<sup>116</sup> What ought to be said here is that Greig and Lochhead are successful international playwrights: what is ‘painfully’ obvious to Greig, as a writer with his own company and regular productions by the National Theatre of Scotland, will be absolutely crippling to an unestablished playwright. Likewise, as one of the few internationally-known Scottish playwrights, Lochhead can afford not to ‘give a damn’ about it. Scottish plays are an extremely tough pitch to English

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<sup>113</sup> Gardner, 2013, no pagination.

<sup>114</sup> Including the National Theatre, the Young Vic, the Bush, and the Royal Court.

<sup>115</sup> Greig talking to Sierz, 2005.

<sup>116</sup> Lochhead talking to Brown, 1984, p48.

theatres, and new writers with no foothold undoubtedly struggle in an area where even the most well-established playwrights admit they have trouble.

The idea is frequently challenged; plenty of notably London-based theatre professionals and critics are ready to argue that there is no deliberate exclusion: I mentioned English playwright Mark Ravenhill earlier, who argued to the *Sunday Times* that he did not think London audiences ‘made the distinction between... a London writer and a Scottish writer’.<sup>117</sup> We might also look at *Guardian* arts correspondent Mark Brown, who writes that ‘there is no agenda against the Scots language’, and suggests that those making these kinds of claims are muttering ‘fools’.<sup>118</sup>

An active agenda is too extreme – and would, I suspect, be difficult to prove if it did exist. Instead, I would argue that, although no theatre in England deliberately sets out to bar new Scots dialect plays, they do nothing to actively encourage them, and a considerable amount to discourage them, accidentally or otherwise. As of the current moment, there is only one major non-Scottish theatre – London’s Finborough Theatre - with a literary policy that actively encourages Scots dialect plays. The Finborough’s rules on unsolicited submissions specify that the theatre ‘can only accept plays written in English, Scots, or Scots Gaelic’.<sup>119</sup> In researching this dissertation, I contacted the theatre about this particular anomaly: Finborough’s Artistic Director Neil McPherson<sup>120</sup> told me that they felt it was necessary to include Scots in their policy, and to encourage Scots plays, because ‘nobody else does in England – we thought it important that someone does’.<sup>121</sup>

It is possible that English theatres shy away from Scottish plays for financial reasons: during our conversation, McPherson then went on to discuss the financial difficulty with some of the Scottish plays the Finborough has produced.

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<sup>117</sup> Ravenhill, talking to Sierz (2005, p6).

<sup>118</sup> Brown, 2010, no pagination.

<sup>119</sup> Finborough Theatre, 2013.

<sup>120</sup> McPherson, despite what his surname might suggest, is a Londoner, rather than a Scot himself.

<sup>121</sup> McPherson, 2013.



The theatre has thus far produced six plays in Scots dialect and one in Gaelic, and McPherson is clear that ‘money is the problem’<sup>122</sup>: specifically, Scots dialect plays are an expensive business to them because the theatre has to either find the right native Scots speakers or else find tuition for non-native actors, and high standard tuition obviously comes at a similarly high price. For the Finborough’s production of MacLeod’s *Somersaults* (2013), McPherson was ‘relying on the good will of the teacher’<sup>123</sup>; an unsustainable long-term position. It seems apt to say here though that, whilst Scots dialects can be problematic, the same might be said of many English dialects: Willy Russell’s *Educating Rita* (1981) is perennially popular in theatres across the UK, despite the broad Liverpool accent of the title role. We also have to consider that whilst the financial problems of Scots plays at the Finborough are exacerbated by the fact that the theatre receives no funding, those English theatres who *are* funded produce fewer new Scottish plays. It seems therefore fair to say that production costs are not the only reason why the Finborough is alone in encouraging Scots plays.

My suggestion here is that part of the reason Scottish writers might find they struggle is that there exists, amongst English theatre managers and theatrical audiences, a great deal of well-documented stigma and even racism with regard to Scottish plays. As Conn argues, there is a great deal of negativity lurking ‘invidiously’ under the surface: ‘when a reservation masquerades as a reservation about thickness of language, actually other factors are involved’.<sup>124</sup> The list of stereotypes is endless, but some are more obvious than others: the idea that Scottish plays are impossible to understand is prevalent, as is the idea that all Scottish playwrights are incapable of writing about anything other than Scotland. Moreover, it seems well-known that when Scottish playwrights write their Scotland-centric plays, they can only ever write about one of two things: cave-dwellers in the Highlands, or drug-dealers in council flats.<sup>125</sup> Much of this

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<sup>122</sup> McPherson, 2013.

<sup>123</sup> McPherson, 2013.

<sup>124</sup> Interviewed in Brown, 1984, p48.

<sup>125</sup> It could be argued that the overwhelming international success of *Black Watch* has gone some of the way towards dispelling these impressions. I would, however, side with the opinion of Reid (2013, p17), that Burke relies a little too much on the mythical clans and traditions of ancient Scotland when justifying the continued existence of the Black Watch regiment. As Reid (*ibid*, p17)

casual prejudice is cemented by Scotland's coverage in the English media, as well as in English and American television and film, and the situation is not helped by the average theatre critic's tendency to pander to established stereotypes. Some of the negative opinion, however, may also be brought on by real tendencies in Scots writers themselves, and indeed, some of it may only really exist in the minds of Scots writers. I will therefore now discuss the variety of negative views of Scots playwrights, with a view to establishing whether or not they play a role in keeping Scottish plays out of English theatres.

### **i. Stereotyping Scotland as Parochial Highlands**

In terms of stigma and stereotyping, the most obvious thing to be said for Scotland is that its national image in the English-speaking media is at best parochial and old-fashioned, and at worst, almost medieval. It is for this reason that I myself feel obliged to avoid any kind of historical or rural play, to avoid encouraging the stereotype, or being seen to do so. As Pattie rightly says, there is a prevalence of 'tartanry' in reference to Scotland; 'the conversion of the unwanted history of the Highlands into a nationally stultifying kitsch' (2000, p2). In our international image, the history of Scotland is often boiled down to almost nothing but romanticised stories about the Jacobites and the Highland Clearances: there is plenty of room for kilts and rolling mountains, but no space for anything of modern Scotland. The portrayal of Scotland in television and film is often of a country under a kind of perpetual feudal system, making a life for itself in misty caves and forests. Slightly sentimental histories have certainly not helped - as seen, of course, in *Braveheart* (1995) - and this is to say nothing of the iconic, violent, castle-dwelling Thanes and witches of Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.

However, the problem is exacerbated further by new films that appear not to be historical at all; rather, implying that Scotland has not changed at all in the past 300 years. Pixar's recent venture *Brave* (2012) demonstrates this well, depicting a Scotland at an unspecified time with modern speech patterns, where the

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says, the play places a 'martial tradition' at its core, and frames that tradition as 'essentially and authentically Scottish' because of its ancient clan-based roots, and in this sense, *Black Watch* does not do quite enough to dispel ideas of Scotland as a feudal Highland warland.

Scottish population are predominantly occupied with archery, tartan, fighting bears, and getting into drunken brawls with other clans.<sup>126</sup> In television too, we see the same picture of Scotland as an old-fashioned land of rolling hills and clan-based land ownership: the popular BBC TV series *Monarch of the Glen* (2000), for example, came with much of the pomp and gentle ridicule of a period drama, but was set in a clan-owned glen in Twenty-First Century Scotland. With this portrayal of Scotland in mind, it is easy to see how there might be a perception that, if even Scotland itself has moved on, entertainment about Scotland seems to be stuck on a loop somewhere in the Jacobite uprising.

It is unsurprising then to find that this stereotyping also finds its way to Scottish theatre. There are those who regard Scots dialect plays with suspicion: if a character speaks with a Scottish accent, they are probably wearing a kilt and carrying a *skean dhu*<sup>127</sup> through the mist. As David Greig puts it, Scots dialect theatre has at times been in danger of being 'consigned... to an outpost of folkloric pastiche'.<sup>128</sup> Some English critics are happy to admit their bias on this point: Aleks Sierz, a Londoner with a ridiculous, self-confessed 'lingering' suspicion of Scots plays, wrote in *The Sunday Times* that 'London audiences... see the Scots as so obsessed with the land that you have to wear wellies to wade through their plays'.<sup>129</sup>

In fact, in reality, opinions like this thoroughly discourage Scottish playwrights from producing rural plays. To some extent, the National Theatre of Scotland is attempting to change this situation: plays like Martin Travers' rural Lanarkshire

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<sup>126</sup> Acknowledging the obvious humour of such a wildly inaccurate stereotype, Channel 4 comedy *Garth Marenghi's Dark Place* (2004) famously parodied the country's bizarrely medieval image:

DAGLESS For the first time ever I saw the Scotch in their natural habitat, and it weren't pretty ... Everywhere I went it felt like they were watching me; fish-white flesh puckered by the Highland breeze; tight eyes peering out for fresh meat.

...

SANCHEZ My aunt lives in Scotland; she says it's quite nice.

DAGLESS Well, she's wrong.

<sup>127</sup> A now ceremonial knife worn at the ankle, when wearing full dress tartan.

<sup>128</sup> Greig, 2002, no pagination.

<sup>129</sup> Sierz, 2005, no pagination.

*Roman Bridge* (2011) and David Harrower's adaptation of Roger Hutchinson's Raasay and Skye-based novel *Calum's Road* (2012) are notable, as are collaborations with a wide variety of rural community groups and Scottish theatre companies.<sup>130</sup> Equally notable, however, is that despite extended tours, such plays rarely – if ever – leave Scotland. The NTS is still relatively young, however, and it may be that the situation will change over time.

For the moment, I myself tend to avoid writing in anything other than modern Glaswegian – avoiding the Ayrshire part of my dialect entirely – because of the criticism and mockery around the rural and historical Scots genres. This reluctance stems from the fact that when Scottish plays about the land and our distant history *do* appear in London – and I would argue that this happens far less than is so often implied – then the critics feel at liberty to brand those few plays as evidence of the truth behind the stereotype. Such plays are then duly lambasted with the kind of 'Celtic mist' comments levelled at Rona Munro's historical play *The Maiden Stone* (1995), discussed later.

Pattie makes a peculiarly unfounded argument here that this problem is self-inflicted: that the stereotype is true and Scots dialect playwrights are obsessed with the 'rural, either passively and quaintly engaged in tending the land or posed against a timeless landscape of glens and tumbling skies', with only occasional fleeting attempts to portray urban working class life (2000, p2). I have already discussed a brief history of urban plays in this dissertation, so it suffices to say that Pattie, writing in the year 2000, ought to know that there have been far more urban plays and playwrights in his chosen seven decades (1930-2000) than the four works he manages to cite<sup>131</sup>; almost all of which were published between 1945 and 1955. Even taking in only the two decades prior to Pattie's article, there are more urban working class dialect plays than he names altogether: to name only a few of them, we might think of James Kelman's *The*

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<sup>130</sup> Certainly in this respect, Scotland is well-served by its National Theatre, considering that England's National Theatre is noted for its distinct lack of collaborations and productions outside London, as argued by Tait (2013).

<sup>131</sup> *Men Should Weep* by Ena Lamont Stewart (1947), *The Gorbals Story* by Robert McLeish (1946), 'George Munro's early work', and *All in Good Faith* by Roddy McMillan (1954).

*Busker* (1991), Stephen Greenhorn's *Passing Places* (1997), Ann Marie Di Mambro's *The Postbox* (1989), Liz Lochhead's *Quelques Fleurs* (1991), and, of course, Harry Gibson's iconic adaptation of *Trainspotting* (1995), which somehow escapes a mention.<sup>132</sup> This is all by way of saying that Scottish playwrights are not obsessed with the rural. If this particular stigma against Scottish playwrights does exist, it is certainly not wholly self-inflicted.

## ii. Scots Playwrights and Insularity

Having mentioned Billington's xenophobic remarks earlier that Scottish playwrights should write more about their own country and dialect, we should also note that there is an existing perception that these same playwrights are too insular; that they are obsessed with writing only about Scotland and in Scots dialects, and are incapable of writing about anything else. As Philip Howard, former Artistic Director of the Traverse Theatre<sup>133</sup>, notes, Scottish writers have to hold onto 'a rigorous determination to avoid being seen as insular or inward-looking' (1998, vii). Despite best efforts, however, there are still those touting the idea that Scots ought to write less about their own issues. This was certainly an implication of Sir Jonathan Mills' decision, when he announced in August 2013 that the Scottish referendum would be banned as a topic at the Edinburgh International Festival in 2014.<sup>134</sup> As McMillan puts it, this is 'memorably silly', and makes certain assumptions about what apparently self-obsessed Scottish playwrights will inundate the Festival with next year: 'The fact that a referendum is taking place next September does not guarantee... that any artist, Scottish-based or otherwise, will want to produce a world-class piece of art about it.'<sup>135</sup> This kind of attitude happens surprisingly frequently, bringing up ideas of Scottish playwrights as a uniform group, all focused on talking only about their own country.

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<sup>132</sup> There are a wealth of Scottish play anthologies to reference here, including Alasdair Cameron's *Scot Free* (1990a), Howard's *Scottish Shorts* (2010) and *Scotland Plays: New Scottish Drama* (1998a), and Brown and Fisher's *Made in Scotland* (1995).

<sup>133</sup> Howard was the Traverse's Artistic Director from 1996 to 2007, and prior to that, was Associate Director from 1993 to 1996.

<sup>134</sup> For more, see Higgins (2013) among others.

<sup>135</sup> McMillan, 2013a, no pagination.

The reality is that Scottish playwrights are as diverse in their writing topics as any other nation's writers. Even when our plays are set in Scotland, this is not to say that they are only relevant to Scottish people, or even that they are about Scotland at all. Certainly, David Harrower fell foul of this assumption with his play *Dark Earth* (2003). As Logan says, critics were quick to jump on *Dark Earth* as being 'fixed most firmly' on Scotland.<sup>136</sup> Harrower himself was surprised and confused by the whole response: "I can't understand how my play is seen as particularly Scottish ... I can't write about an entity. I don't think, 'Right, how am I going to skewer Scotland's psyche with five characters and one setting?'"<sup>137</sup> On reflection, *Dark Earth* may be set in Lowland Scotland, with five Scottish characters and a variety of Scottish dialects, but its plot and themes are not uniquely Scottish. The play seeks to highlight the divide between urban and rural – a divide as relevant in England (or anywhere else) as it is in Scotland – and to point out the financial difficulties experienced by farmers in the UK; again, a point that is not unique to Scotland. However, being set in Scotland and spoken in Scots dialects, it was generally judged that the play had to be about the identity of Scotland. As Billington put it, Harrower's play was deemed an effort to analyse 'modern Scotland's urban-rural divide'; not Britain's.<sup>138</sup>

In response to the idea that Scottish playwrights are insular, it ought to be clear that, like any other national group, Scottish plays are firstly not always about Scotland, but secondly, not always even set in Scotland. As Logan says, Scottish plays 'are as likely to be set in Gibraltar or San Diego as Scotland, and the issue of Scots identity is far from central to their concerns.'<sup>139</sup> Scottish playwrights are as likely as anyone else to write about international or universal issues. David Greig's *Europe* (1995) is an important example here. The play's issues – of globalisation; of national identity – are not uniquely relevant to Scotland, and indeed, the play is not set there. As Rebellato argues, *Europe* is deliberately set in a dilapidated 'non-place', with no particular geographical or historical

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<sup>136</sup> Logan, 2003, no pagination.

<sup>137</sup> Harrower, talking to Logan (2003).

<sup>138</sup> Billington, 2003a, no pagination.

<sup>139</sup> Logan, 2003, no pagination.

connection, somewhere 'on the edge of a middle-European state' (2002, xiii). With abandoned towns and villages across the European map, the violence and economic instability of the play are relevant issues for an entire continent, and are not ideas limited to Scottish understanding. In a similar vein, Catherine Czerkawska's *Wormwood* (1997) uses Scottish language to make a point that is universal. The words might be noticeably Scottish, but the characters are Ukrainian: the play is set in Pripyat, during and after the Chernobyl disaster. Although partially inspired by her experience of being in Scotland in 1986 and hearing about radioactivity moving slowly westward, Czerkawska wrote *Wormwood* with the view of making the point that 'given a particular set of demands on human fallibility, anything can happen anywhere' (1997, p63). The play may use some elements of Scottish dialect, but it is not a play about Scotland, and never references Scotland specifically: its issues are familiar ground for everyone. With numerous other plays like this, it seems difficult to say that Scottish writers are consistently or remarkably inward-looking, and yet the stigma persists. As Liz Lochhead says, London audiences seem insistent that they 'shouldn't have to listen to [Scottish plays]. They think they will not be relevant to them.'<sup>140</sup>

### **iii. Incomprehensibility and Scottish plays**

As mentioned earlier, it seems that non-Scot, and particularly English, audiences often experience difficulty in understanding Scots dialect plays. However, it seems a foregone conclusion that people expect the dialect to be incomprehensible, and therefore come to the play predisposed not to understand it, or do not come at all, believing that they will not understand it. As Conn puts it, 'the English ear is always said to resist broad Scots'<sup>141</sup> – 'resist' being the operative word. Scottish dialects are frequently portrayed as, and believed to be, unintelligible: as discussed previously, this stems largely from the point in the 1600s when English became Scotland's official language, and Scots dialects became socially unacceptable in formal and written language.

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<sup>140</sup> Lochhead, talking to Logan (2003).

<sup>141</sup> Conn, talking to Brown (1984, p48).

This view is often reiterated in today's society, both in the UK and abroad, and reinforced by portrayals of Scots in the media, with rural Scots dialects coming in for particularly harsh criticism. Subtitles are frequent, and often unnecessary, in both news and entertainment programming: Wilson notes the 'linguistic hierarchy' involved in completely superfluous 'southern English calls for subtitles when BBC Scotland's Chewin' the Fat was networked'<sup>142</sup>, and Lawson notes that Scots are subtitled in English programming with surprising frequency, in a *Guardian* article that asks the pertinent question, 'When does subtitling risk becoming racially offensive?'.<sup>143</sup> In America, *The Simpsons'* nonsensical Orcadian janitor Groundskeeper Wullie<sup>144</sup> and *Austin Powers'* equally unintelligible Fat Bastard<sup>145</sup> are just two of the characters synonymous with the Scots identity in the media. This issue is not helped by the sheer popularity of these creations: the notoriety of these characters has made them easily and therefore frequently impersonated, and thus cemented their association with Scottish accents in general. The same can also be applied to the overly guttural voice of Mike Myers as Shrek<sup>146</sup> and to exaggeratedly slurred impersonations of Sean Connery as James Bond<sup>147</sup>. Again, Pixar's *Brave* (2012) provides a pertinent example: the character Young MacGuffin's sole role in the film is to provide a running joke by speaking in exaggerated Doric dialect, whilst various other characters look on in blank confusion. American director Mark Andrews said of this that 'we've left some of it unintelligible because that is the gag'; the joke being that not even the Scots can understand themselves.<sup>148</sup> This variety of joke at the expense of Scots dialects – as with other strong regional dialects – is easy to find in international media, so we can understand why the view might persist that Scots are incomprehensible.

For some playwrights, however, this has become a more serious issue: some of

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<sup>142</sup> Wilson, 2000, no pagination.

<sup>143</sup> Lawson, 2012, no pagination.

<sup>144</sup> See *The Simpsons* (1989).

<sup>145</sup> See *Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me* (1999).

<sup>146</sup> See *Shrek* (2001)

<sup>147</sup> See *Dr No* (1962), *From Russia with Love* (1963), *Goldfinger* (1964), *Thunderball* (1965), *You Only Live Twice* (1967), *Diamonds are Forever* (1971).

<sup>148</sup> Andrews, talking to McIver (2012).



the more difficult dialect plays suffer serious abuse when taken outside of Scotland, with critics quick to resort to stereotypical jokes, which do nothing to help the reputation of the plays in question. There is, I would argue, no better example than that of the previously mentioned *The Maiden Stone* by Rona Munro (1995), first staged at Hampstead Theatre. Lyn Gardner, interviewing Munro eleven years later, makes a passing joke that critics ‘never seem to have forgiven her’ for writing the entirety of the play in an Aberdeen dialect.<sup>149</sup> Gardner is hitting on a serious point here: the English critical response to *The Maiden Stone* was devastating and, at times, seemed unreasonably angry that the play had been staged in the first place, being as far as it was from standard English. As Munro herself puts it in an article for *The Scotsman*: ‘I expected racism from some reviewers, I found plenty of it: demands for subtitles, condescending parodies of the dialect.’<sup>150</sup> One doesn’t have to look far to find exactly the kind of review Munro was talking about: again, Michael Billington makes an unsurprising appearance<sup>151</sup>, but we might also look at *The Times*’ review by Benedict Nightingale, who characterised the play as trapped behind ‘thick Celtic mist’ and full of ‘primal yells interspersed with sentences containing the words “och, he’s braw”’.<sup>152</sup> Nightingale then went on to say that he would find it ‘easier to prune a monkey puzzle tree’ than to understand this play’s language.<sup>153</sup> It seems disgraceful that reviewers for major British broadsheets can get away with this kind of blatant racism. If in doubt, imagine that the same comments were made about any other section of society: if Nightingale had said that he couldn’t understand the English of Britain’s Caribbean population, for instance, because they communicated only in nonsense and ‘primal yells’, it doubtless would not have been printed. When referring to Scottish people, however, such racism somehow becomes acceptable.

Cameron posits that this phenomenon is brought on by a lack of shared language and identity between Scottish authors and London audiences (1990, p.x). His

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<sup>149</sup> Gardner, 2006, no pagination.

<sup>150</sup> Munro, 1995a, no pagination.

<sup>151</sup> Billington, 1995.

<sup>152</sup> Nightingale, 1995, no pagination.

<sup>153</sup> *ibid*, 1995, no pagination.

argument is that the majority of the audience at 'West End and national theatres' are 'professional, Oxbridge-educated, RP-speaking' – the same background shared by the majority of playwrights produced in these theatres (ibid, p.x). Thus, Cameron says, Scottish playwrights, educated at state schools, are excluded for lacking this language and background (ibid, p.x). This is, of course, a sweeping argument; Cameron massively overstates the lack of diversity in both audiences and playwrights at these theatres<sup>154</sup>, as well as making the ridiculous assumption that all Scottish playwrights come from less privileged backgrounds. I would argue here that whilst Cameron correctly identifies the problem, he attributes it to the wrong group: the gap is not between Scottish authors and progressively diverse English audiences, but between Scottish authors and English critics and theatre managers. This is the argument put forward by Aitkenhead (2012) and Kent (2011); the point that, leaving aside the audience, the majority of London *newspaper critics* are more inclined to be 'professional, Oxbridge-educated, RP-speaking', while the larger audience as a whole are more diverse in their dialects, and perhaps less opposed to Scots dialects than a review of the critics would indicate. As Kent puts it, 'critics are invariably snooty about work which challenges the monolingual state of standard English', whilst audiences can 'find it refreshing to see work that ... offers a subaltern voice.'<sup>155</sup> Again, this over-generalises, but there is something to be said for the notion that (for whatever reason) the media perpetuates the idea that Scottish plays are incomprehensible, and this feeling is not necessarily held by audiences. In this sense then, perhaps Scots dialect plays are not at a total disadvantage.

As a final note here, Matheson and Matheson make an interesting point, that even if Scottish plays *were* uniformly harder to understand, that should not exclude them from consideration in non-Scottish theatres (2000, p218). If, as they put it - 'some works of Scots literature can be difficult to understand, but if children can be asked to cope with Shakespeare, whose prose demands much explanation of vocabulary' - then surely non-Scots audiences can 'have a stab' at even the more complex Scots dialect plays (ibid, p218). Similarly, it would be

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<sup>154</sup> Although there is some evidence of London theatre being London-centric, despite being held up as 'national', as Daniel Bye (2010) suggests.

<sup>155</sup> Kent, 2011, no pagination.

both unlikely and socially embarrassing for a critic reviewing a production of *Hamlet* to comment on their difficulty in understanding the unfamiliar language, so one has to wonder why those like Billington find it necessary to comment on it in every Scots dialect play they review. Nevertheless, such treatment remains the norm, and the common perception that Scots are incomprehensible may be a factor in the decisions of non-Scots theatres.

#### **iv. Portraying Scottish Plays as Urban Nightmares**

I mentioned earlier that in recent years, urban realism, moving into urban dystopia, has become a popular genre in Scottish writing. We should now discuss the inevitable backlash: a move to generalise all Scottish plays as depressingly crime-ridden. Again, Scotland's portrayal in film and television has not been entirely helpful here: it is difficult to escape the impression left by *Taggart's* gruesomely violent Glasgow and its ubiquitous catchphrase, 'There's been a murder'.<sup>156</sup> Moreover, few Scottish writers can escape passing comparisons with the global impression made by *Trainspotting*, and its vision of Edinburgh as a hazy city of drugs and vomit. More recently, we might look at the popularity of Peter Mullan's *Neds* (2010): a film which, regardless of Mullan's excellent direction, leaves a lasting impression of Glaswegians taping knives to their hands in order not to drop them during gang fights. Such iconic productions, I would argue, have affirmed widespread received ideas about Scottish writing as a depressing crime spree.

There is no better way to express the general feeling towards Scots dialect plays than to turn to Hutchison, who summarises it thus: people feel that 'Scottish writing is dour, dark, and in need of sexing up' (2011, p28). There are plenty who expect that any given Scottish play will revolve around violence, drugs, poverty and death. As Sierz says, many Londoners, including Sierz himself apparently, believe that 'hip Scottish drama is all about needles and thieving', with modern Scottish theatre being best characterised as an endless rehash of

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<sup>156</sup> See *Taggart* (1983).

*Trainspotting*.<sup>157</sup> The fact that Sierz feels he can jokingly and very publicly confess to this casually racist belief speaks volumes on the appalling stereotyping of Scottish theatre. Condemnation of Scottish writers on this front has been widespread and viciously exaggerated: Channel 4's Head of Programmes Stuart Cosgrove lambasted all Scots writers for their love affair with the 'culture of poverty'<sup>158</sup>, while Jenny Brown took a broad brush and characterised all of Scottish literature as 'miserabilist'.<sup>159</sup> The term 'miserabilist' has now become a term commonly used to talk about large swathes of Scottish playwrights, who supposedly wallow in continuous dramas about run-down council estates. I say 'supposedly', because I would argue that any thin factual basis this argument ever had has long since become a thing of the past, as I discuss later.

It is interesting to note, however, that some of the most vocal criticism on this front has been from Scots themselves, and even from Scots playwrights. Stuart Cosgrove, for instance, is from Perth, but we might also look at Stewart Conn<sup>160</sup>, who criticises his fellow Scottish playwrights for sentimentalising 'violence in a totally spurious, because purportedly hard, presentation of working-class life'. Moreover, Scottish academia has been critical of the situation too: we can look at Duncan Petrie who notes, looking at literature, film and television, that 'one of the most striking features of Scottish cultural production of the last twenty years is an unsettling sense of nastiness' (2004, p116). Notably, the Scots here do not go as far as Sierz to say that all Scots are obsessed with drug-dealing. Nevertheless, we have to note that this particular stigma, then, does not come solely from non-Scot audiences.

Earlier in this paper, I wrote that social realism provides a large part of modern Scottish literature, with a strong presence of urban dialect and urban (therefore often working-class) issues. In that sense, we do ourselves no favours with regard to this particular perception of Scots plays: as Stevenson says, Scottish

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<sup>157</sup> Sierz, 2005, no pagination.

<sup>158</sup> Cosgrove talking to Martin (2005).

<sup>159</sup> Brown, quoted in Hutchison (2011, p28).

<sup>160</sup> Conn talking to Brown (1984, p48).

drama has 'thrived' since the 1920s in 'shabby domestic settings, rarely more than a few feet from the kitchen sink' (2001, p3).

However, I would also argue, as Byng does, that it is entirely wrong to categorise Scottish urban realism as depressing just because of its subject matter; to write it off automatically as a miserable slog through the problems of poverty without seeing it.<sup>161</sup> As Byng says, to 'dismiss [the genre] as being doom and gloom because it is dealing with dark, contemporary trouble and problems with society' is to miss out on a great deal of potent humour and wry social commentary from talented authors.<sup>162</sup> It is useful here again to note Harrower's *Ciara*; a play full of dark humour about modern society, but also one which – being about the daughter of a Glaswegian drug lord – could be wrongly dismissed as too depressing. We might also look at Simon Donald's *The Life of Stuff* (1992), which documents a day with a group of criminals in a warehouse. Its dialogue is consistently fast-paced and darkly humorous, opening with a bantering conversation between two drunk ravers, a gangland boss and his assistants:

*ARBOGAST They'll help.*

*EVELYN Long as we don't have to touch.*

*ARBOGAST Now that is a wee bit uncalled for, doll.*

*HOLLY Nervous eczema isn't contagious. Just repulsive.*

*EVELYN Any sort of rash makes me nervous. Stop calling me doll you.*

*HOLLY Anyway, I'll bet you can get drugs for it.*

*EVELYN Bet you can't at this party.<sup>163</sup>*

Moreover, even if its ending is somewhat bleak, it also retains an element of hope and humour: the criminal Arbogast is murdered, but the two raver girls, Evelyn and Holly, who accidentally get caught up in the play's events eventually escape off home with a bag of wine gums. As Taylor said of the play's run at the Traverse, it has an 'underlying refusal to despair'.<sup>164</sup> With plenty of other plays

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<sup>161</sup> Jamie Byng, from publishers Canongate, talking to Scott (2004).

<sup>162</sup> Ibid, no pagination.

<sup>163</sup> Donald, 1992, p65.

<sup>164</sup> Taylor, 1992, no pagination.

like this one to choose from, I would argue that we should not dismiss Scots dialect plays as too depressing to be staged: even if they do sometimes contain violent and harrowing subject matter, there is more to them than that.

What I would say at this point is that the critics of Scottish 'miserabilism' – both inside and outside Scotland – are generalising far too much about the totality of Scottish playwriting output. As Hutchison says, in response to Stuart Cosgrove's comments: 'The problem ... is that Scottishness has come to be rather narrowly defined, and that narrowness ill reflects the totality of what is being produced in the literary field' (2011, p28). Indeed, as has been clearly demonstrated over the course of this paper, the sum and substance of Scottish playwriting cannot be totally characterised as merely 'urban', never mind 'urban miserabilist'.

Bizarrely, on this particular point of prejudice towards Scots plays, it seems that Scottish writers cannot have it one way or the other: having previously said that all Scottish plays are about robbery and drugs, Sierz makes the astoundingly inconsistent argument that one of the reasons why Scottish playwrights struggle in London is because they are not depressing or violent *enough*: 'Londoners tend to write dramas that... trawl cynically through the underclass' and are 'set on council estates', and so Scottish playwrights, who 'share a feel for language and form', fall by the wayside.<sup>165</sup> This opinion obviously flies against everything previously argued about Scottish 'miserabilist' playwriting, and Sierz fails to give any real concrete examples of what he means by his definition of Scottish playwrights.

Having said that, David Greig backs up this opinion in a more rational way, believing that London audiences are left in 'bemusement' when it comes to the 'softer voices, the poetic voices, and the experimental voices' of Scottish playwriting.<sup>166</sup> This much, I would argue, is completely accurate: Scotland's current innovative playwriting is unsuited to the modern commercialisation of London theatres and the tourist audiences of the West End, where it seems there

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<sup>165</sup> Sierz, 2005, no pagination.

<sup>166</sup> Greig, 2002, no pagination.

is less room for new writing, particularly of an experimental variety, and more reliance on the safety of either slightly bland realism and well-known English writers - Alan Bennett and David Hare being easy examples - or else on well-known classics as performed by celebrity actors. As Michael Billington argues, the London theatres are suffering from a 'heavy reliance on solid revivals' and a troubling 'sense of stasis'.<sup>167</sup> What Sierz blames on Scottish 'feel for language'<sup>168</sup>, then, seems to be less about a lack of underclass cynicism on the part of Scottish writers - or even an abundance of it - and more about a lack of bold decision-making on the part of London theatres.

On a similar point, in fact, it could also be argued that the idea that Scots writers are 'miserable' may actually work in the favour of the Scots do who write such plays. Hutchison argues that the 'miserabilist' problem, as he sees it, lies with producers rather than with writers: producers see drug-dealing, violent plays as a safe venture for reeling in audiences, and anything else is too hard to sell (2011, p28). There seems to me to be some truth in this point; that in fact, if Scottish urban working class dramas are staged more frequently, that is not to say that they are the only thing that Scots writers are submitting to theatres and publishing houses, but rather that they are the most popular with readers and producers. Hutchison's theory is that our impression of Scots writing could be very different 'if a few executives were to take some risks and look for a wider range of material' (ibid, p28). Greig is equally firm on this issue, taking the view that southern theatres handpick miserable Scottish plays and create the stereotype: 'this doesn't diminish those plays' but Londoners 'feel most comfortable with Scottish work when it fits their understanding of Scots - violent and funny poor people who are slightly frightening.'<sup>169</sup> In this sense then, perhaps Scots dialect plays that adhere to this image are actually at an advantage when they reach non-Scot theatres.

The idea posited by Hutchison that lighter Scottish work finds less support is also backed up by Canongate publisher Byng, who, in response to reports that

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<sup>167</sup> Billington, 2011, no pagination.

<sup>168</sup> Sierz, 2005, no pagination.

<sup>169</sup> Greig, 2002, no pagination.

Scottish writers were attempting to lighten up their work, said that some Scots writers had always been doing so, and had simply been ignored in favour of a generalisation: 'I think what we are seeing now is no different from what's happened over the last 10 or 15 years, where there seems to be a constant emergence of really interesting, original new voices out of Scotland.'<sup>170</sup> My argument here is that firstly, not all 'miserabilist' plays are as miserable as is claimed, and secondly, that even if they are seen as miserable, that doesn't necessarily disadvantage them in English theatres. Finally, however, and most crucially, we cannot possibly tar all Scots dialect plays with the same brush on this issue: Scots playwrights are not a uniform group we can deride for their dismal outlook.

## **VIII. The National Frame and Wider Applications**

### **i. Applying Scotland's case further afield**

This dissertation focusses on Scottish dialect playwrights, because this is my own background, and therefore the most useful focal point for me. This research should not, however, be taken to mean that the Scottish experience is unique in the world, or even unique in Britain. The experience of Scottish playwrights, as detailed in this dissertation, is comparable with that of a range of playwrights in other regions and nations across Britain<sup>171</sup>, and my research may hopefully serve as a small case study in a wider discussion of dialect playwriting and its aims and obstacles.

In many ways, in fact, the experience of Scots dialect playwrights is reflective of the wider relationship between metropolitan theatre culture – and particularly, but not exclusively, London theatre culture - and Britain's Celtic nations. Wales

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<sup>170</sup> Byng, talking to Scott, 2004.

<sup>171</sup> As part of a wider picture, it might also be useful to compare Scots dialect playwriting with the experience of English-based dialects, and minority dialects in general, from across the world. Although their linguistic history is different, there may be lessons we could learn in comparing the treatment of Scots dialect plays with the treatment of, for instance, plays written in Jamaican Creole; itself often disparaged as 'bad English' and kept from formal institutions. Such a comparison may yield valuable thoughts on why playwrights choose to write in their own dialects instead of RP English.



and Ireland are perhaps the most obvious sources of comparison with Scotland: both nations have strong similarities in their dialectical relationship with RP English, and both have dialects seen only infrequently in Britain's national theatres. It is argued by Sierz that Irish dialect is marginally more successful in this respect than either its Scots or Welsh counterparts<sup>172</sup>, but it is not so successful that a comparison with Scotland is out of the question. At the other end of the spectrum, Wales is arguably less represented than Scotland, and it is commonly said – as by Gardner (2009) – that Wales lacks a real tradition of professional theatre-making, but has a strong history of amateur theatre performance. With more space, it would be interesting to investigate the truth of this, and to make a comparison between the experiences of Scotland and Wales here, to examine why this difference exists, and whether separation from metropolitan theatre has any role to play in Wales' playwriting history.<sup>173</sup>

Cornwall is another relevant comparison here, with regard to the relationship between metropolitan British theatre and the Celtic nations. If there is any question about whether the national theatres of England are obliged to produce the work of other countries, the question applies as much to Ireland and Wales as it does to Scotland. The same query cannot be raised, however, about the English county Cornwall<sup>174</sup>, and yet Cornish playwrights are still underrepresented in London's national theatres, providing apt comparison with the Scottish playwriting experience. As Cornish playwright Alan Kent argues, the Cornwall dialect of English is chronically underrepresented in English national theatre because, like Scots dialects, it is 'too quirky or strange to be admitted'.<sup>175</sup> With reference to the other Celtic nations of Britain, therefore, the findings of this dissertation are not wholly unique to Scots dialect.

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<sup>172</sup> Sierz, 2005, p6.

<sup>173</sup> For more on Irish dialect playwriting, see Middeke and Schnierer (2010) and Richards (2004) as a starting point and for more on Welsh dialect playwriting, see Williams (2004) and Taylor (1997).

<sup>174</sup> At the time of writing, Cornwall remains an English county, although recent announcements of its official minority status may be a step on the road to devolution.

<sup>175</sup> Kent, 2011, no pagination. It seems pertinent to note here that Cornwall Council announced plans in 2012 for a National Theatre of Cornwall, styled after the National Theatre of Scotland, as part of its five-year culture programme: a move that would seem somewhat superfluous if Cornish theatre was fully represented by English national theatres.

As already mentioned, however, this is not a question of England being overrepresented in the national theatres, but rather of metropolitan London being overrepresented, whilst regional dialects around Britain, including inside England, are neglected. The local dialects of Yorkshire, Teesside, Tyneside and Merseyside, for instance, are persistently neglected in national and regional theatres because, as Daniel Bye argues, ‘metropolitans might think [them] parochial’.<sup>176</sup> As with Scots dialects, many regional English dialects are dismissed as ‘bad English’, and are subsequently crudely stereotyped, barring them from any significant presence in theatre, film and television. As an example, there are notable similarities in the associations made about rural Scots dialects and Yorkshire dialects: in much the same way as rural Scots dialects are twinned with poor fishermen and farmhands, Yorkshire dialect speakers are categorised as either uneducated miners or ‘taciturn farmers’, as pointed out by Hensher.<sup>177</sup> In these and other ways, Scotland is by no means alone in its experiences with dialect playwriting and London theatre, even if exact details may vary across regions and nations.

## **ii. Discussing Scots playwrights within a national frame**

McCrone, in summarising the state of the nation at the end of the Twentieth Century, refers to Scotland as a nation of ‘city states’, divided along regional and economic lines (2001, p28). On this basis, considering the diversity of Scotland, it seems wise to consider how valuable it is to use a national frame when discussing Scots dialect theatre and Scots dialect playwrights; to consider whether this group is truly united in any way that merits discussion at a national level.

In terms of their region and regional dialect, Scots playwrights are notably diverse, as is evident in the discussion throughout this dissertation. The heading of ‘Scots playwrights’ includes a wide range of writers from the Lowlands to the Highlands; from the islands to the mainland; all of which come with their own

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<sup>176</sup> Bye, 2010, no pagination.

<sup>177</sup> Hensher, 2013, no pagination.

distinct dialects. Their experience of playwriting is undeniably affected somewhat by this regional diversity: the experience of a Shetland playwright, for instance, who knowingly writes for a small audience<sup>178</sup> and who may produce work with no intention of it leaving Shetland<sup>179</sup>, is obviously different from that of a Glaswegian playwright, for example, who has easy access to Edinburgh and the well-populated Central Belt and who, even if they only write for other Glaswegians, has a potential audience base more than twenty five times larger than that of Shetland. In this sense, we might perhaps consider that we cannot discuss all Scots dialect playwrights as a united group.

The same might be argued with regard to the class divide amongst Scots playwrights. Again, as with region, there is a significant range of economic backgrounds amongst Scots playwrights: a group which includes middle-class writer David Greig, who attended prestigious Edinburgh private school Stewart's Melville College<sup>180</sup>; working class playwright James Kelman, raised in a Govan tenement block; and finally Des Dillon, writer of *Singin' I'm No a Billy He's a Tim* (2008), who arguably fell into Scotland's underclass, having subsisted for a significant period as an illegal squatter in an abandoned and dilapidated council flat in Coatbridge.<sup>181</sup> Given these economic backgrounds, it might again be said Scots playwrights' experiences are too separate to merit consideration as one united group. We can query, for instance, whether derogatory attitudes towards working class Glaswegian dialect put certain playwrights at a greater disadvantage, or whether the middle and upper classes have more ease of access to theatre and playwriting opportunities, and therefore see more representation of their dialect.<sup>182</sup>

Regardless of region or class, however, I would argue that many Scots dialect playwrights share the same writing motivations, and in this, there are enough

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<sup>178</sup> As noted by Murray and Tait (1996b, p25).

<sup>179</sup> As with the previously discussed NToS *Ignition* project.

<sup>180</sup> Higgins, 2009, no pagination

<sup>181</sup> For more on this, see Dillon, 2011, no pagination.

<sup>182</sup> There is interesting research in this area, however – as discussed by Brown (1984) and Macaulay (1991) to suggest that in actuality, a significant number of middle class Scots writers have tended to try to evoke a more working class dialect in order to be successful in Scottish theatre.

commonalities to validate a discussion of Scots dialect playwrights as a whole, even considering the diversity of the group. Considering all the writing motivations discussed in this dissertation, none is specific to one region or social group; each one is applicable to all of Scotland. The decline of written Scots, and the subsequent barring of Scots dialects from formal institutions, applies as much to the Highlands and Islands as it does to the Central Belt; as much to deprived areas as to wealthier ones. As discussed, this phenomenon was the school experience of middle-class playwright Lochhead in Glasgow<sup>183</sup>, and of miner's son MacIlvanney in working class Kilmarnock<sup>184</sup>, and the same is reported in Shetland in a study by Melchers, where Shetlanders confessed feeling forbidden to speak Shetland dialect either at school or in the workplace (Melchers, 1985, p98). Regardless of class and region, the motivation to protect Scots dialects is the same across the nation: Lewis resident Iain Finlay Macleod's play *Somersaults* (2013), discussed in this dissertation, expresses the same defence of the Scots tongue as is seen in Glasgow-based John McKay's *Dead Dad Dog* (1988). In discussing why Scots writers choose Scots dialects, it seems therefore sensible to discuss the nation as a whole.

Equally, during the writing process, there is a wealth of similarity amongst Scots dialect playwrights across the country. As a starting point, each writer's lexicon is similar, regardless of their particular dialect: as Millar points out, even the Scots dialect of Shetland has 'characteristics of more southerly Scots dialects' (2008, p237). Where class dialects are concerned, Corbett makes the interesting observation that, rather than any significant change of dialect, the real distinguishing factor of a middle-class urban accent in Kelvinside (Glasgow) and Morningside (Edinburgh) is 'one orthographic feature': the pronunciation of <a> as <e>; pronouncing 'party' as 'perty', for example (1997, p14). Given the similarity of dialects between classes and regions, it follows that, sharing much of their vocabulary, Scots dialects all feature the same central problem: there is no official unified spelling of said vocabulary. The significant list of associated problems and obstacles that I discussed in this regard are therefore applicable

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<sup>183</sup> Lochhead interviewed in Brown (1984, p48).

<sup>184</sup> MacIlvanney interviewed in Murray and Tait (1996a, p137).

across Scotland: it is no easier for a Glaswegian to satisfactorily spell out their dialect than for an Aberdonian to do so. In this respect, it seems best to discuss all Scots playwrights as one general group.

In discussing the notion of using profanity as a playwright, it might be suggested that this is an issue unique to urban dialects. However, as previously noted, plays like Gregory Burke's Fife dialect-based, foul-mouthed *Gagarin Way* (2001) prove that using profanity to create a true representation of dialect is not limited to the Central Belt. Liz Lochhead notes that there is a 'shockingness [sic] ... enshrined in the language' of Scottish culture as a whole<sup>185</sup>. Even if that may not be unique to modern Scotland, we can certainly see it as applicable across modern Scotland. Therefore, with regard to process, it seems helpful to use a national frame here to talk about the problems of Scots dialect writers as a whole, rather than in individual regions.

Further to that, in the audience reception of dialect plays, Scottish regions again have enough common experiences to merit a discussion of the nation as a whole. In discussing comprehension levels, urban and rural Scots dialects struggle equally: Michael Billington resented being 'linguistically battered' by the Glaswegian dialect of Ronan O'Donnell's *Brazil* (2003)<sup>186</sup>, whilst the Doric of Rona Munro's *The Maiden Stone* (1995) was lambasted for being apparently unintelligible, as discussed. There is no distinction here between regions: any strong Scots dialect, regardless of its origin, seems to present comprehension problems for its audience; the likely result of which is usually a loss of the humour and subtleties of the writing.

I would argue therefore, given the similarity of playwrights' experiences throughout Scotland, that it is valuable to discuss Scots dialect playwrights in national terms, as well as looking at the experiences of individual regions and classes. However, it should be noted that the validity of discussing Scots playwrights as a united group is wholly dependent on what lessons Scotland

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<sup>185</sup> Lochhead interviewed in Brown (1984, p56).

<sup>186</sup> Billington, 2003, no pagination.

takes from its experiences of under-representation within metropolitan British theatre, and how those lessons are applied within Scotland today. As McCrone intimated in his discussion of Scotland as a grouping of 'city states'<sup>187</sup>, Glasgow and Edinburgh (and to a lesser extent Dundee and Aberdeen) do tend towards cultural dominance. Scotland's capital and its largest city are undeniably the two dominant theatrical centres of Scotland, largely owing to their size, number of venues, and in the capital's case, the Edinburgh Festival. With that in mind, it is easy to see how rifts may form in the future if we are not careful to ensure that all parts of Scotland are fully represented in our theatres; particularly with regard to the National Theatre of Scotland, which provides a major source of opportunity for all Scottish playwrights.

Since its foundation, The National Theatre of Scotland has been much lauded for its innovative structure, because its lack of a permanent venue allows it to move freely around Scotland; a 'roving company free of the tyranny of big buildings' (Billington, 2012). Projects like *Transform* (2009) and *Home* (2006) have been impressive in their bids to involve Scottish communities in telling theatrical stories about their islands, towns and cities. When work is toured in Scotland, NToS is admirable in its wide variety of venue sizes and locations: as an example, David Greig's *The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart* (2013) was taken to town halls, pubs and local theatres from Kelso up to Ullapool, as well as touring in England, Ireland and the US. Moreover, the content of NToS productions generally reflect a wealth of dialects and cultures across Scotland, from the Borders setting of the aforementioned *The Strange Undoing*, to the representation of Northern Raasey and Skye in David Harrower's adaptation of Roger Hutchinson's *Calum's Road* (2011). Gaelic language too is well-represented, as with Fiona Mackenzie's *A Little Bird Blown Off Course/Eun Bheag Chanaidh* (2013).

Having said that, it is important that the NToS should not become complacent over time, and must continue to represent all regions and dialects (as well as the Gaelic language) in its productions. It seems a shame that no extensive national

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<sup>187</sup> McCrone, 2001, p28.

projects like *Home* or *Transform* have been undertaken since 2009, and moreover, it seems a hugely wasted opportunity that the work produced in those projects was produced only for the local communities and for extremely short runs, and was not taken to other parts of Scotland. If, as former director Vicky Featherstone claimed, the National Theatre of Scotland's role is to provide a multitude of voices that 'throw open questions and undefine' what it is to be Scottish<sup>188</sup>, then it makes sense that all parts of Scotland should hear each other's voices and open their minds to other parts of Scotland, rather than keeping the work of a community exclusively within that community. Moreover, the NToS' performances – though not necessarily its texts, as discussed – are occasionally somewhat centred on the Central Belt: a reading of the NToS production archive and of the current 2014 programme reveals a current predilection for Glasgow venues in particular, with Edinburgh venues as a close second. There are obvious financial considerations to take into account, including the cost of touring and potentially larger city audiences, but nevertheless it seems clear and vital that the National Theatre of Scotland must take care to truly be national; to take full advantage of its lack of central venue, and continue to tour extensively throughout the nation, allowing audiences across Scotland to experience of all of Scotland's dialects and cultures. In doing so, they will also go some way towards preventing the relationship between Glasgow, Edinburgh and Scottish regional theatre from becoming a microcosm of the relationship between London and British regional theatre. If Glasgow and Edinburgh's dominance becomes vastly disproportionate, or exclusive of other Scottish regions and dialects, then it may no longer be useful to utilise the national frame employed in this dissertation.

## **IX. Conclusion**

Any attempt to summarise the motivations of an entire group of playwrights can only ever be incomplete; there will, of course, be other more personal reasons why Scottish playwrights elect to write in their own dialect. However, I argue that this paper accurately reflects the experiences of many Scottish playwrights,

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<sup>188</sup> Featherstone talking to Dickson, 2011, no pagination.

and moreover, is borne out by my own experience of negotiating identity as a Scottish playwright.

There are a variety of reasons why I choose to write in Scottish dialect now, but it should be said that, as with other writers discussed in the dissertation, peer pressure was a significant factor at the beginning of my writing career. In starting out as a Scottish playwright in England, I initially felt that, in some ways, my Scottish identity was forced upon me. Some English audiences and fellow playwrights expressed that they were more interested – and sometimes *only* interested - in reading and hearing work I had written in my own dialect. After reading my first play, *Notes* (2010), readers often expressed surprise and disappointment that I had not written about Scottish characters. In many ways I felt that, as a Scottish playwright in England, my being Scottish was my defining quality, in a way that it perhaps might not have been if I had stayed in Scotland, surrounded by and less easily distinguished from other Scottish writers. In my research for this dissertation, I found I was not alone in experiencing this kind of peer pressure to be more Scottish: the belief expressed by Michael Billington - that Scottish writers should not cunningly ‘eschew’ Scottish issues<sup>189</sup> – was familiar, if irritating, and I felt a close connection to the notion expressed by David Greig, that Scottish writers are trapped and ‘trying to free [themselves] from the prison of identity politics’.<sup>190</sup>

Peculiarly, this period at the beginning of my career was also the point when I felt most pressure to write in Standard English. As mentioned in the dissertation, sharing my Scottish dialect work initially left me disheartened, because non-Scottish readers said they could not understand the basic language, and this seemed to bar them from examining the characters or plot in any detail in their feedback. From research, I could see that critics often gave professional Scottish playwrights the same treatment, as with Benedict Nightingale’s suggestion that it would be ‘easier to prune a monkey puzzle tree’ than to understand the dialect of Rona Munro’s *The Maiden Stone* (1995). However, instead of bolstering my

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<sup>189</sup> Billington, 1998, no pagination.

<sup>190</sup> Greig interviewed in Gibb (1998, no pagination).



confidence, this only made me more anxious: considering that this was the treatment given to professional playwrights, I was deeply concerned about what critics might say about my own unpractised use of Scots dialect. It seemed to me that if I was going to write in my natural dialect, I would have to school myself to be impervious; to ignore any criticism that my dialect was incomprehensible. As I found, however, this is not a particularly helpful emotional state for a writer: beginning a play with the strong suspicion that the work will not be understood does not provide much in the way of writing motivation. Thus, at points, writing in Standard English seemed the more viable option.

Ultimately, however, negotiating my identity as a playwright became a matter of what I wanted and who I was as a playwright, rather than what I felt was required of me. If I only wrote what I 'should' write and not what I wanted to write, my playwriting would be a joyless prospect for me and for audiences. The idea is frequently repeated but, in my view, best expressed by Janet Neipris, who argues that the best thing a playwright can do is 'hold to their voice', setting their own playwriting goals and embracing every element of their unique identity (2005. p3). In my case, that identity is Scottish and English. I see myself as Scottish in my upbringing, but after eight years in England, I feel an equal affinity for my adopted home – the 'dual identity' expressed by Rona Munro<sup>191</sup> – and I want to be free to use either or both influences in any given play.

Over the course of this Ph.D., therefore, my journey as a writer has been an attempt to build my confidence in reflecting all the facets of my identity; to give myself the space to write in Scottish dialects or to write in English ones, when it suits my purpose and accomplishes my writing aims. To that end, my play *Fox's Children* (2013a) represents a turning point in my development as a writer, in that I developed my ability to write dialogue in strictly formal English. At the same time, writing my play *Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic Too* (2013) helped me to feel more secure in writing broadly in Scots dialect. Though strikingly different in their styles, both plays represent equal parts of my identity as a Scottish playwright, and represent significant steps in my journey towards

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<sup>191</sup> Munro, 2012, no pagination.

writing in dialects of my own choosing.

When I do choose to write in Scottish dialect now, there are a variety of reasons behind that decision. From the start, however, one of my most conscious motives, as noted in this dissertation, was the notion of regaining a lost childhood dialect. Playwriting would be a chance to prove, as discussed, that my childhood language was worth as much as the Standard English that replaced it. In writing Mo and Ally's speech in *Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic Too* (2013), and to some extent Stef's speech in *Filthy Little Explosions* (2012a), I was interested in depicting young people using Scots dialect in the way I had at their age, and particularly, in using words and phrases I had been taught not to speak. During research for this dissertation, it was encouraging to learn that I was not alone in this reaction; that a large number of Scottish playwrights, including Lochhead<sup>192</sup> and MacIlvanney<sup>193</sup>, had written about and because of their own lost dialects, as discussed.

In the course of this dissertation, I discussed writers' motivations for choosing particular rural or urban dialects, and much of what was said also holds true for my own dialect choice. Of course, my decision to write in my childhood Glaswegian dialect would seem to mean that I write with an urban dialect by default, rather than choosing urban over rural for artistic or political reasons. In fact, however, there is an element of choice involved in my avoidance of rural dialect: I did grow up with a maternal family of rural Ayrshire dialect speakers, and I have always deliberately chosen not to use that part of my dialect. As discussed in this dissertation, my reluctance is primarily because of the continued association between rural dialect literature and depictions of farming and fishing, as well as between rural dialect and historical plays. As a matter of personal preference, I had no real interest in writing about historical Scotland or about rural farm life, so I – perhaps unfairly – avoided writing in rural dialect. However, as mentioned, there are now writers - Gregory Burke and his play *Gagarin Way* (2001) being an excellent example - who produce work about

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<sup>192</sup> Lochhead interviewed in Brown (1984, p48).

<sup>193</sup> MacIlvanney interviewed in Murray and Tait (1996a, p137).

modern global industry in rural Scotland. In the future, I may consider this in writing new plays, in order to extend my experience of writing in dialect.

As with writing motivation, it would be difficult to attempt to list all the possible obstacles an individual Scottish playwright might encounter in their writing process. My research therefore encompasses only those problems that pose the most frequent and most difficult challenges to Scottish playwrights. Again, my own writing experience reflects the experience of other Scottish playwrights in this regard.

Looking specifically at problems posed by writing in Scots dialects, I would say that lack of unified spelling was – and remains – my biggest challenge, as well as being an as-yet unresolved issue even for professional Scottish writers. Being regularly forced to research how to spell a word before writing it is a time-consuming process, which often distracts me from the flow of my dialogue. This is particularly frustrating when you consider that, in most cases, even the most thorough research will not yield any conclusive answer, as discussed in this dissertation. One could simply opt to pick the first spelling that comes to mind, but such a method will inevitably result in problems when others come to read the finished play. There have been attempts, as discussed, to resolve the problem – as with the Scots Language Society and Lallans – but with no success as yet. This therefore remains an ongoing issue for me, and finding a way to move past basic spelling issues is a point I aim to improve on in the future.

Comprehensibility in performance has been another major source of difficulty in my writing experience and, looking at the experience of Scottish playwrights in general, we can say that there are notable issues with comprehension levels among non-Scottish audiences: subtle points of uncommon dialects are lost, as is specific dialect humour, on some levels. It should be said, however, that neither problem completely detracts from the plays in question: whilst audiences in readings sometimes found it hard to understand the Glaswegian dialect of *Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic Too* (2013) and the Scottish cultural references of *Filthy Little Explosions* (2012a), this did not prevent their emotional

connection to the characters. Even without understanding the finer points, there is much that a non-Scots audience can appreciate about a Scottish play, as audiences found with Harrower's *Ciara* (2013).

Having said that, however, the final conclusion of the paper is that Scottish dialect plays struggle to reach non-Scottish audiences in the first place. English theatres, with only the Finborough as an exception, do not encourage Scottish plays, and English theatre critics actively discourage them. Scottish plays are disparaged as incomprehensible, too parochial, too medieval, too violent, too depressing and too obsessed with Scotland. The fact that some of these stereotypes are conflicting seems not to matter to the most vocal detractors: it seems implausible that a whole group could be too obsessed with drug-dealing and at the same time too obsessed with feudal farming. We can easily see that these stereotypes are untrue, but it seems that they may play a part in the struggles of Scottish dialect writers.

For my own part, I am cautiously optimistic about the way forward from here. The vibrancy of Scottish theatre at present, particularly in the Traverse Theatre and in the world-renowned Edinburgh Festival, is enough to persuade me that change is possible. Certainly, there is talk of a 'golden age' in current Scottish theatre, as alluded to by Dawson Scott (2008, p40). At the same time, there is the potential for a shift in the theatrical landscape: constantly dwindling arts funding in England<sup>194</sup> may leave Scottish theatres as a more appealing option, as argued this year by new NTS director Laurie Sansom.<sup>195</sup> The National Theatre of Scotland too, whilst still relatively young, proves that Scottish theatre is capable of attracting international accolades, and shows a demonstrable interest in being truly national; a representative theatre for all of Scotland. Activity in my hometown, Glasgow, is encouraging too; the Playwrights Studio Scotland is working to attract and nurture a variety of new Scottish playwrights, and offer them support along the way, and my plan now is to work with others in this area.

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<sup>194</sup> With further Arts Council cuts still to come in 2014-15, as Thorpe (2013) points out.

<sup>195</sup> Sansom, quoted in Higgins, 2013b, no pagination.

There is, of course, some pessimism about possible improvement for Scottish playwrights: Hutchison laments the fact that the Traverse Theatre is the only Scottish theatre with 'new writing at the core of its programming', moves on to say that other theatres lack the Traverse's 'consistency' and budget, and therefore concludes that Scotland, unlike England, cannot financially support its writers (2011b, p207). This is of course highly spurious – particularly given the afore-mentioned arts funding cuts in England. Regardless, Scottish dramatists will, Hutchison argues, be obliged to go to England to make a living, and will duly find themselves barred from 'financial success' because of their Scottish dialect (ibid, p207). This Doomsday scenario is not entirely unfounded, as discussed, but its negativity is somewhat ridiculous. As a starting point, I would question Hutchison's logic that, because there are more 'often-unpaid' fringe writing opportunities in London, English playwrights are somehow more well-paid than their Scottish counterparts<sup>196</sup>: the notion of *unpaid* work seems to have bypassed him slightly. In any case, Scottish playwrights are by no means limited solely to Scottish and English theatres: as always, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland seem to have been entirely dropped from the equation, as have the theatres of Canada, America, and Australia – all of which had no issue with the broad Fife dialects of *Black Watch*, and all of which certainly contributed to the play's financial success. It seems to me that there is a great deal of potential for Scottish theatre as an international success story.

There is much to be done to bridge the gap between English and Scottish theatre, and to make room for Scottish dialect theatre more particularly. As evidenced throughout this paper, there is a wealth of excellent Scottish dialect theatre – both past and present – that struggles to make itself heard, never mind understood, on non-Scottish stages. If a larger discussion were to take place regarding the exclusion of Scottish dialects – and other regional dialects – from British theatres, it could surely only enrich British theatre as a whole.

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<sup>196</sup> ibid, p207.

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### **Audio Visual**

*Austin Powers: The Spy Who Shagged Me*, 1999 [Film] Directed by Jay Roach (Los Angeles, New Line Cinema)

*Brave*, 2012 [Film] Directed by Mark Andrews (California, Pixar Animation Studios)

*Braveheart*, 1995 [Film] Directed by Mel Gibson (Arizona, Icon Entertainment International)

*Diamonds are Forever*, 1971 [Film] Directed by Guy Hamilton (London, Eon Productions)

*Dr No*, 1962 [Film] Directed by Terence Young (London, Eon Productions)

*From Russia With Love*, 1963 [Film] Directed by Terence Young (London, Eon Productions)

*Garth Marengi's Dark Place*, 2004 [TV series] Directed by Richard Ayode (London, Avalon)

*Goldfinger*, 1964 [Film] Directed by Guy Hamilton (London, Eon Productions)

Greig, David (2011) *The Strange Undoing of Prudencia Hart* [live performance], National Theatre of Scotland, 9<sup>th</sup> February 2011 – 30<sup>th</sup> March 2014, touring venues across Scotland, the UK and the US.

Harrower, David (2011) *Calum's Road* [live performance], National Theatre of Scotland, 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2011 – 26<sup>th</sup> November 2011, Tron Theatre, Glasgow, and touring venues across Scotland.

*Monarch of the Glen*, 2000-2005 [TV series] Created by Michael Chaplin (London, Ecosse Films)

Mackenzie, Fiona (2013) *A Little Bird Blown Off Course/Eun Bheag Chanaidh* [live performance], National Theatre of Scotland, 4<sup>th</sup> September 2013 – 1<sup>st</sup> February 2014, touring venues across Scotland.

*Neds*, 2010 [Film] Directed by Peter Mullan (Glasgow, Blue Light)

*Taggart*, 1983-present [TV series] Created by Glenn Chandler (Glasgow, SMG Productions)

*The Simpsons*, 1989-present [TV series] Created by Matt Groening (New York, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Fox)

*Thunderball*, 1965 [Film] Directed by Terence Young [London, Eon Productions]

*Trainspotting*, 1996 [Film] Directed by Danny Boyle (London, Channel 4 Film)

Thomas, Stuart (2002) *Damn'd Jacobite Bitches* [live performance], 28<sup>th</sup> November – 21<sup>st</sup> December 2002, The Citizens' Theatre, Glasgow.

West, Nigel (2001) *Babes in the Wood* [live performance], 6<sup>th</sup> December 2001 to 19<sup>th</sup> January 2002, The King's Theatre, Glasgow.

*You Only Live Twice*, 1967 [Film] Directed by Lewis Gilbert (London, Eon Production)

## Portfolio

### A Record of Progress and Activity 2011-2014

1<sup>st</sup> January 2011:

Shortlisted for the NSDF's 2010 International Student Playscript Competition for my play *Notes*.

10<sup>th</sup> January 2011:

I apply for a slot in Script Yorkshire's Script Factor competition; an audience-judged competition, where each writer is given a fifteen minute slot and audience Q+A, before everyone votes on the winner to go on to the final in York Theatre Royal. Given a place in the April event at York City Screen Basement Bar.

14<sup>th</sup> January 2011:

I enter my play *Notes* into the Ronald Duncan Playwriting Competition; a competition for new playwrights, where the winner's play will be produced by Encore Theatre and underwritten to a maximum of £1000.

14<sup>th</sup> January 2011:

I enter *Notes* into the Tobacco Factory's Script Space IV, a competition for new writers.

21<sup>st</sup> January 2011:

I apply to the Emerge Writers' Attachment Scheme, a partnership between Birmingham Rep and Unicorn Theatre, for new writers to work with the Artistic and Participation teams to create young people's theatre.

3<sup>rd</sup> February 2011:

I submit a sketch to BBC Radio 4 Newsjack.

February-March 2011:

I send an email to Leeds-based verbatim company The Paper Birds, asking whether or not they'd be able to take me onboard to gain some experience of what they're doing. Producer Elle Moreton says they can take me onboard for the duration of their tour *Others*. Meeting them at their studio, I watch the cast develop the script from its original draft (performed at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2010) to its final form for the national tour. The process is fantastic to watch, and the cast and directors ask for my input regularly – it's a massive confidence boost, as well as informative about how writing might change in the rehearsal room. From February to April I work with the company to market the show, as

well as going with them to various venues (including the Carriageworks and Leeds Met Studio Theatre) to meet the staff there and help set up.

February 2011-present:

I am taken on as the PR and Marketing Trustee at Upstage Youth Theatre Centre; a youth theatre charity with its own studio theatre at 41 Monkgate, York. The theatre hires out its space to various amateur and professional companies, allowing me to gain an insight into how I might go about having my work produced. Over the course of three years, I gain strong experience in marketing, arts fundraising and use of studio spaces, as well as making useful connections with local and touring theatre companies.

16<sup>th</sup> February 2011:

I enter *Notes* into the 2011 Papatango New Writing Competition.

7<sup>th</sup> March 2011:

I enter a sketch into BBC Radio 4's Newsjack.

21<sup>st</sup> March 2011:

I write to Robin Soans, Alecky Blythe and Gregory Burke, to ask if they'd be able to offer me any advice on verbatim style and their writing process. Robin Soans offers to meet me in London, to spend a day with him and his class at LAMDA, as they develop a new piece based on Craig Murray's memoirs, *Murder in Samarkand*. The class was an amazing demonstration of different ways to develop a script – Soans conducted a two hour conversation with the students on their understanding of the memoirs and their sympathy (or lack thereof) for Murray, primarily looking at the mundane details of his life, rather than the larger issues of political corruption. The day also gave me plenty of ideas on how to work with actors on developing a script, asking them to take roles and interpret them in different ways.

Ultimately, meeting Robin Soans was a particularly influential point in my writing development, because after the day at LAMDA was over, Soans took me out for lunch and discussed my writing and how to write political theatre. At the time, I was floundering in the dark slightly over how to make writing political without making it a public reading of my chosen doctrine, and Soans really helped enlighten me on this. In the end, his advice boiled down to focussing on the smaller details of a character – that he likes empire biscuits, for example – rather than focussing on his larger political views – that he wants Scottish independence – and in doing so, the plot would come to me more easily. We looked at a variety of examples from Soans' own work – the detail of characters' eating habits in *The Arab-Israeli Cookbook* and *Talking to Terrorists*, particularly – and then discussed how I might use this to create my own characters in my next plays. This was one of the most helpful pieces of advice I've had thus far in

my playwriting career, and was really influential on my later work in the Ph.D.

23<sup>rd</sup> March 2011:

The Paper Birds ask me to handle their Twitter feed during their event Feminist Futures; a panel discussion of feminism in theatre, with the artistic directors of Red Ladder Theatre Company and Sphinx Theatre Company, with whom I got to chat for an hour before the event started, talking about how they run their respective companies and their attitude towards new writing.

7<sup>th</sup> April 2011:

My 15-minute play *Smog* is chosen as the winner of the first heat of the Script Factor competition, at York City Screen. Afterwards, I manage to talk to Mike Kenny (writer of the recent *Railway Children* adaptation) about writing for children and getting your work read publicly.

9<sup>th</sup> April 2011:

I submit *Smog* to Bushgreen, the online literary department for the Bush Theatre.

11<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> April 2011:

The Paper Birds invite me to come with them to the National Theatre Studio in London, where they've been given funding to produce a new play for the Edinburgh Fringe and a 2012 national tour, based around the topic of binge drinking in the UK. We work with Wendy Houstoun (whose previous collaborations include DV8 and Forced Entertainment) and with Kirsty Housley (Associate Director of Complicite), coming up with the original ideas that will become the final show. The company makes sure I'm involved at all levels, from warm ups with the actors to writing the copy for the Edinburgh Fringe brochure. Two of the most useful sections are in learning where the company gets their inspiration: we gather round a table and take turns to read out questionnaires filled in by the public, about their drinking habits, about their embarrassing drinking stories. I also learn the concept of a durational – a major inspiration for much of the company's later script-writing – where the actors are given a table of props and are asked to improvise for three hours without stopping, to see where it goes, while the producer films it. The week's experience also raises questions for me and for the company about the fine line, in subjects like this one, between theatre and educational theatre.

In some ways, in fact, the Paper Birds offered a useful experience for me insofar as that I learned what I wanted to be as a writer from what I didn't enjoy about their method and production. The Paper Birds ultimately cared more about movement than about particular words in their show – a completely different view from my own meticulous choice of words in my scripts. In some ways, I often felt that even they didn't truly know what their show meant, and when it came to the Edinburgh Fringe, I felt completely baffled when reviewers seemed thrilled to give the show meanings the company had stumbled on by chance.

Their shows were entertaining, and a valid form of theatre, but to me, were sometimes in dire need of an actual playwright within the company. It was an illuminating experience in the sense that I hadn't previously realised how strongly I felt about how important word choice is to a play, and how important it is to have someone who gives a production purpose and structure.

1<sup>st</sup> June 2011:

I enter *Smog* into Little Pieces of Gold.

18<sup>th</sup> July 2011:

My piece *Late Rooms* is chosen as the winner of the Script Factor final at the York Theatre Royal. It's a really great experience to watch the pieces of other local writers, as well as receiving feedback on my own piece, and after the evening finishes, I'm approached by Liz Wilson (CEO of York Theatre Royal) and literary assistant John Wilkinson about how they can help with my work. I'm also invited for a twenty-minute interview on Vixen 101, an East Yorkshire radio station, about my current writing.

20<sup>th</sup> July 2011:

I apply for a marketing internship with Otley Courthouse – a small community theatre and music venue in Otley, West Yorkshire. The internship is originally intended to run from August to December 2011, but is extended to March 2011 as the board of the theatre decide to keep me on for another season. It's a great opportunity to understand how a theatre programs its season, including large amounts of new writing from small producing companies, as well as work from professional theatre companies, stand-up comedians, and musicians. The internship provides me with a real insight into how rural playwrights make a living.

In some ways, the experience at the Courthouse also helped me to work out what I didn't want to do as a playwright; many of the small plays produced at the theatre were, in my eyes, particularly inconsistent writing, for the sake of cheap comedy. One play in particular featured a lead character who, in the space of four lines in the same scene, went from falling over, blind drunk, to competently compiling a legal contract. The audience enjoyed the comedy, but it felt forced for me, and opened my eyes to the idea of sacrificing character development for the sake of a throwaway joke.

3<sup>rd</sup>–27<sup>th</sup> August 2011

The Paper Birds invite me to work with them at the Edinburgh Festival, where I flyer for them in the day time, then run the lighting desk for the evening performances. Watching the performance for the entire month is a real insight into how it feels to be part of a long-running show, as my previous experience has been limited to week-long runs, and it was very quickly obvious that motivation (and a durable set) are really important to a successful show at the



Fringe. I spoke frequently with the company about their Fringe experience over the past eight years, and they highlighted some of the key areas where young companies and new writers often experience problems. At the same time, The Festival was particularly useful for my growing experience because, having been a part of the original research effort in London in April, it was interesting that I really didn't agree with the show they produced in the end. It seemed that the directors had gone into the research process with a fixed idea of the show they wanted to produce, and thus ignored or completely misrepresented the larger part of their research, at least to my eyes. Although I kept this to myself, it was really educative to see how a successful show was produced, in a way that I personally wouldn't have agreed with.

The process was useful in the sense of helping to form my opinion on how research ought to be used in relation to verbatim theatre. The company's use of their gathered interviews was often much more fast and loose with the truth than I would personally have been in writing a script, and sometimes their final shows felt somewhat of an abuse of the trust of those they'd interviewed. This is not to say that anyone was offended or damaged by the shows (although they might have been, had they seen the final performances) but rather that it helped me to know how I would go about such a process, were I to embark on a verbatim theatre piece (as I later did, in a play called *Bicycles*, written for York Theatre Royal's *Blood and Chocolate* season.)

August 11<sup>th</sup> 2011

York Theatre Royal contact me, following the Script Factor event, to say they'd like to enter my writing into the Pearson Playwright Scheme, offering a bursary for writers sponsored by a theatre.

August 12<sup>th</sup> 2011

I apply for the 503five scheme at Theatre 503.

September 16<sup>th</sup> 2011

I enter *Late Rooms* into Little Pieces of Gold.

September 18<sup>th</sup> 2011

I apply for the Taleblazers New Writing Showcase at Southwark Playhouse.

November 2<sup>nd</sup> 2011

I enter *Late Rooms* into a competition run by new London-based group Viscera Theatre, for their new writers' night 'Let's Get Visceral'.

November 9<sup>th</sup> – June 9<sup>th</sup> 2011

I successfully apply to be the General Manager of the Takeover Festival at York Theatre Royal – a three-week festival where the theatre is run entirely by under-25s. As General Manager, I'm in charge of recruitment, organising contracts and fees with visiting companies, and overseeing the organisation of events and corporate sponsorship, among other things. The experience allows me to liaise with various members of the Senior Management Team at York Theatre Royal, as well as getting to know more about how a season's programming works within larger venues.

December 21<sup>st</sup> 2011

My 15-minute piece *Neither the Day Nor the Hour* is selected as one of six winners of the Modern Mysteries competition, run by York Mysteries 2012. The brief was to write a piece inspired by the York Mysteries, and the anonymous submissions were judged by Mike Kenny, writer of the recent adaptation of the Railway Children. I and the five other winning writers met with Liam Evans-Ford, the York Mysteries Producer and York Theatre Royal Community Producer, for an initial read-through. The play will be performed publicly during the Mysteries Festival in August 2012, before being taken to Galtres Festival on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup>-Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> August.

January 28<sup>th</sup> 2012

I apply to Benchmarks 2012 – a competition run by Park Bench Poets at Hull Truck.

April 8<sup>th</sup> 2012

I submit my play *Late Rooms* to Sherman Cymru's ScriptSlam.

April 13<sup>th</sup> 2012

My play *Neither the Day Nor the Hour* is reviewed in 'Medieval Mystery Plays in the Modern World – a Question of Relevance' by Professor Margaret Rogerson of the University of Sydney, to be published in the 2013 issue of Year's Work in English Studies.

April 26<sup>th</sup> 2012

My play is given to the York Mystery Plays Associate Director Alexander Wright to cast and direct for a public read-through at York City Screen Basement Bar – this step in particular was really fantastic for me, as it was the first time I'd ever seen my work interpreted by others without my input in the rehearsal room, and seen that direction transferred to a public stage (with a full house of approximately 70 people).

May 26<sup>th</sup> 2012

As part of my role as General Manager for the York Theatre Royal Takeover Festival, I meet with James Grieve, the Co-Artistic Director of Paines Plough, a prominent theatre for the production of new writing. James sits with me and two other members of the Senior Management Team, and talks to us forthrightly about how to go about having our work read and taken forward. The conversation is not only an insight into Grieve's own career, but incredibly inspiring in the sense that he treated us as equals and gave some really valuable advice about how best to achieve what we wanted as writers, as well as recommending some plays I should read that corresponded well with my own writing style.

One of the most useful lessons I took away from this was Grieve's discussion with us about how best to make a name for yourself in the theatre industry. He himself started by organising a weekly playwriting evening where any writers attending would be asked to make a rapid response to a subject of the writers' collective choice, and to perform them at the end of the night. It seemed an incredible idea to me, and one that I wanted to try as an exercise for myself. More than that, however, he gave us a really detailed plan of how exactly to go about getting the attention of agents through similar projects, which was really useful information to know, since Grieve himself only achieved his current position relatively recently, making the advice particularly relevant.

May 29<sup>th</sup> 2012

Using the connections I made during the Takeover Festival, I approached both the Takeover Senior Management Team and the Theatre Royal's Senior Management Team about the prospect of starting up The Writing Press, a new monthly event for writers, where pieces would be written based on articles selected from the news headlines of the week. Liz Wilson (the Theatre's CEO) then took this idea on to the theatre's programming meetings, to a very positive response, and the idea is currently in consideration at the theatre.

May 31<sup>st</sup> 2012

I successfully apply for a paid position as Writer-in-Residence at Bootham School – a local private Quaker school – where I will live in residence and teach different methods of creative writing for two hours a day to students aged between 10 and 18, as well as helping them to write and stage their own plays, start their own writing groups, and put together a school newspaper, as well as working across subjects with my counterparts in the Art and Music Department. The role should allow me to help the pupils develop their creative talent as well as fully realising my own writing.

As a side note, the interview process itself was incredibly exciting, as it was the first time I'd had the script in question read by young people at the age of the characters I'd written, and their acting – and enjoyment – of the script, helped

me to confirm areas where the piece did and didn't quite ring true as realistic teenage voices.

June 18<sup>th</sup> 2012

Paul Birch, Associate Director of Riding Lights Theatre, confirms that I will be able to get involved with him in an upcoming verbatim project, collecting stories from local army families in order to create a play around the subject.

July 4<sup>th</sup> 2012

Successfully upgraded to PhD status.

Aug 12<sup>th</sup> 2012

| Meetings with other local theatre makers about the possibility of creating a new theatre season in York, featuring new writing.

Aug 13<sup>th</sup>-27<sup>th</sup> 2012

I assist fellow PhD candidate Hannah Davies in marketing her newly written show *Githa* at the Edinburgh Festival. It's a really interesting learning curve to watch how a show is produced for someone in a similar position.

August 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> 2012

*Neither the Day nor the Hour* is performed at the Galtres Festival in association with the York Mystery Plays and York Theatre Royal.

Aug 20<sup>th</sup> 2012

I apply for Old Vic New Voices' 24 Hour Play project.

August 27<sup>th</sup> – September 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012

*Neither the Day nor the Hour* is performed as part of the Modern Mysteries in York Museum Gardens.

September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012

I begin my role as Writer in Residence at Bootham School. Activities I teach the students this term will include playwriting, comedy sketch writing, creative writing in social media, poetry, short story writing, teaching Shakespeare with the sixth form, and starting a school newspaper at both the senior and the primary school.

October 1<sup>st</sup> 2012

I enter the HighTide Writers' Festival Bootcamp competition, and am chosen as one of the winners. As part of the prize, I am given the opportunity to be

mentored by Rob Drummer, HighTide's Literary Manager and one of the current artistic directing programme at the Young Vic.

October 22<sup>nd</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> 2012

I attend a two-day workshop of my writing with Rob Drummer and a group of other young writers, at the MAC in Birmingham. It's an incredibly useful process, going through both my own work and pieces put on at last year's HighTide Festival, to assess where my own work succeeds and fails. Perhaps the best lesson I took from the two days was exactly what HighTide looks for in a ten page sample, in terms of plot revelations, character development, and setting.

Another useful, yet also slightly bizarre, exercise was set to us on the day: Drummer asked us all to go out into the streets and parks around the MAC for an hour, and at a discreet distance, follow people of our choice and write down their speech. The exercise was slightly uncomfortable for me, but was designed to pick up vocal tics and the exact sound of real conversation. Although it did feel invasive, everyone produced work as a result of it that was like nothing any of us had written before, so in that sense, it was an eye-opening task.

October 24<sup>th</sup> 2012

Meeting with Paul Birch and fellow PhD student Matt Midgley, where we decide that the Riding Lights army project will consist of three half-hour plays, written by each of us. This work will mark my first play with a definite staging and cast in mind, which is a really fascinating project for me. Several challenges are presented here: firstly, that all parts will be played by 5-12 year olds, secondly, that the company need as many parts and busy scenes as possible to give enough things to do for their 30-strong cast, thirdly, that there need to be some throw-away parts for cast members who might be a little more shy but still want a line or two, and fourthly, that the three plays have to be in some ways consistent in order to be performed back to back, so drafts will need to be read and edited collaboratively – all of which is very new to me. Thus far, I've been used to creating plays with no cast age restrictions, no specific space or subject to use, and no necessity to involve walk-on parts. In fact until now, I've been encouraged to be ruthless with characters, cutting anyone that seems anything less than essential to the central plot.

November 10<sup>th</sup> 2012

I attend an Advanced Workshop for the Bruntwood Prize, at the Sheffield Crucible, with Suzanne Bell, the New Writing Associate for Manchester's Royal Exchange Theatre, and Andrew Sheridan, writer of Winterlong and previous winner of the Bruntwood Prize. I learnt a brilliant trick here, which is to take the opening scene of your play, including any stage directions, and only the first four lines of dialogue, and give them to another person without explanation, asking them to give three questions in response, and a sentence on what they think will happen. If the three questions they ask will be answered in the course of the play, and things don't play out exactly the way they said in the sentence, the

opening is off to a good start. I'm not sure how practicable this is in all circumstances, but it works really well for me in passing around the first page of my Riding Lights piece during the session.

November 15<sup>th</sup> 2012

I complete the first draft of my Riding Lights play, titled *for fierce confusion, peace*.

November 16<sup>th</sup> 2012

I meet with Simon Benson, Head of Drama at Bootham School, to discuss a York Theatre Royal project – *Blood and Chocolate* – about the role of the Quaker faith and York's chocolate factory owners, in the history of York, specifically around World War I. As part of the project, I am asked to write a play for Bootham's students, about the history of Bootham as a Quaker school in World War 1.

November 21<sup>st</sup> 2012

I send a 100 word play assignment (titled *Pulling Stunts*) to Rob Drummer at HighTide Festival, along with two scenes from *Oil on Canvas* for feedback.

November 24<sup>th</sup> 2012

A public reading of *for fierce confusion, peace* held at Bootham School, as part of the school's recital programme. The reading is script-in-hand, for an audience of approximately sixty teachers, former students, and members of the public, with a chance for audience feedback after the reading. This was particularly useful given that many of the teachers were either parents of or teachers of children aged 4-9, and they were able to provide good judgement on the younger voices in the script.

December 13<sup>th</sup> 2012

A workshop in the TFTV department with Tom Cornford, Tom Cantrell, Mark Smith, Mark France, Matt Midgely and Hannah Davies, where we looked at work from each of the PhD by Practice writers in turn. The process was incredibly useful, both for thinking laterally about my own work in progress, as well as sharing ideas with the other two writers about their work, and comparing writing processes.

December 20<sup>th</sup> 2012

Final draft of *for fierce confusion, peace* submitted to directors at Riding Lights Theatre.

January 14<sup>th</sup> 2013

Meeting with Simon Benson, Liam Evans-Ford of York Theatre Royal, and Bootham school archivists about writing the Blood and Chocolate project for the Bootham. This will be my first historically accurate and in some ways biographical project, closely featuring the school's past headmaster Arthur Rowntree. This meeting also marks the beginning of a month of research into the school's history and old scholars.

January 16<sup>th</sup> 2013

*for fierce confusion, peace* is cast by Riding Lights Theatre and I attend the first read-through with director Jon Boustead, to answer any questions the cast may have about the script.

January 26<sup>th</sup> 2013

My short play *Late Rooms* is shortlisted for Descent; a competition for new writers in London, where winning plays are developed and performed, giving the writer close involvement in the process.

February 5<sup>th</sup> 2013

I begin attending workshops at York Theatre Royal to participate in a Blood and Chocolate verbatim theatre writing project in association with Pilot Theatre and Script Yorkshire.

March 14<sup>th</sup> 2013

A PhD by Practice workshop in the TFTV department with Tom Cornford, Mark Smith, Mark France, Matt Midgely and Hannah Davies, where we looked in depth at issues with each of our scripts, mine being the script I was writing for Bootham School. In some ways, this meeting was interesting because some others in the group wanted my script to be much more politically extreme than my school wanted it to be, or than I felt was appropriate for the age group the play would be aimed at. It was an interesting exercise therefore in learning about the restrictions playwrights can find when asked to write a play that corresponds with one venue's particular agenda and political views.

March 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> 2013

*for fierce confusion, peace* is performed at Riding Lights Theatre and at Strensall Barracks. The experience is incredibly useful and inspiring for me, marking the first time my plays have been directed without my input, and for a paying audience.

March 26<sup>th</sup> 2013

As part of the previously mentioned verbatim project, I complete a fifteen-minute verbatim piece, *Bicycles*, based on the relationship between York's Quakers, its chocolate factories and the cocoa plantations of the Ivory Coast.

Script copies are given to Pilot Theatre and York Theatre Royal, and the script is given a public reading with staff from both Pilot and YTR in attendance.

April 1<sup>st</sup> 2013

I enter IdeasTap's Editor's Brief: Rising competition with my short piece *How Everyone Wants to Move to London*.

April 9<sup>th</sup> 2013

I enter the Invertigo competition to write a short play for the HighTide Festival 2013; a competition requiring a 70 word treatment, which was really useful as an exercise, meaning condensing my play synopsis down to just a couple of sentences.

April 12<sup>th</sup> 2013

I complete a first draft of *A Subtle Resistance*<sup>197</sup>, the play written for Bootham School, based on ideas of Quakerism at the school in relation to how staff and students reacted to the First World War. I send the draft to Simon Benson, the play's director and Head of Drama, for his thoughts.

April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2013

Simon Benson sends my play *A Subtle Resistance* to be read by Pilot Theatre at York Theatre Royal, in advance of a workshop on it at the school later in the week.

April 25<sup>th</sup> 2013

Pilot Theatre runs an eight-hour workshop of my play with the cast selected by Simon Benson, as well as with the school's archivist, to help the cast develop ideas on their characters. It's an amazing experience for me, to see the cast round out characters I've created, and it's also really useful to see how a young cast treats a writer's script in production.

May 10<sup>th</sup> 2013

A reading of *A Subtle Resistance* is performed for the Old Scholars of Bootham; a Quaker war veteran comes to talk to me about the play afterwards and comments that the script was evocative and accurate about Quaker wartime life. It's really great feedback for me; its accuracy (particularly when presented to those who had experienced events in the play) had previously been my main concern about the script, since I'd never worked on a piece so closely based on real events before.

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<sup>197</sup> Named by the student performers of the script.



May 13<sup>th</sup> 2013

I apply for Theatre Centre's Adrienne Benham Award – a £2000 seed commission for a playwright new to writing theatre for young people.

May 19<sup>th</sup> 2013

I finish a first draft of my duologue play, *Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic Too* and send it to Mary Luckhurst, as well as to the other PhD by Practice students for their opinions.

May 29<sup>th</sup> 2013

With feedback from Mary and the PhD students, I finish a second draft of *Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic Too*.

May 30<sup>th</sup> 2013

I enter *Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic Too* into the Papatango New Writing Prize 2013.

June 4<sup>th</sup> 2013

I contact Neil McPherson, Artistic Director of the Finborough Theatre, about an issue discussed in my dissertation, relating to the theatre's policy on Scottish dialect plays. The contact is informative for me not only in terms of my dissertation argument, but also in the sense of gaining an insight into how plays like mine fare in development.

June 29<sup>th</sup> 2013

*A Subtle Resistance* is performed at Bootham's Parents' Day. The performance is extremely educational, being my first play performed in a theatre space with a proscenium arch. In my head, I've always written for a studio space, so it was a very different experience from anything I've been used to thus far.

August 13<sup>th</sup> 2013

I enter *Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic too* into Yale University's Yale Drama Series international competition for emerging playwrights writing in the English language. It's a really thorough application process, in which I learned how to write scripts in Yale Standard Professional Play format – one of the standard formats of US play scripts, and a very different format from the ones I usually use.

August 14<sup>th</sup> 2013

I enter *Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic too* into the International Student Playscript Competition.

August 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013

I attend David Harrower's new play *Ciara* at the Traverse Theatre during the Edinburgh Festival. It's an incredible play to me in terms of its use of Glaswegian culture and language, and a strong influence on my writing in new play *Portlagin*.

September 1<sup>st</sup> 2013

I submit a ten-page scene from *Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic too* to the Playwrights' Scotland Studio's Stage to Page monthly script readings, along with a synopsis and questions I'd like the audience to answer about the scene.

September 12<sup>th</sup> 2013

Along with Bootham's development director Jane Peake, I meet with Sam Johnson from HistoryWorks. HistoryWorks are interested in taking my play about Bootham's history, *A Subtle Resistance*, and pitching it to the BBC as a radio play. HistoryWorks are commissioned to find twenty such plays as a part of the BBC's local programming for next year; four of which will go on to be produced for BBC Radio 4.

September 20<sup>th</sup> 2013

*A Subtle Resistance* is performed at the York Food Festival in conjunction with York Theatre Royal's Blood and Chocolate project.

September 26<sup>th</sup> 2013

*A Subtle Resistance* is performed for all students at Bootham, taking all year groups off timetable for the afternoon, making an audience of roughly five hundred. Sam Johnson from HistoryWorks also attends.

October 16<sup>th</sup> 2013

I attend a writing workshop with Simon Stephens in the TFTV Department. It's a really brilliant chance to understand how Stephens works as a writer, and one of the exercises he uses with the group is amazingly useful. The idea of immersing yourself in two contrasting pieces of music when writing one scene really helped me to produce something new.

October 26<sup>th</sup> 2013

Through a family friend, I make contact with Kirsty Williams, BBC Radio Drama producer and director for BBC Radio 4 and BBC Radio Scotland, at Pacific Quay, Glasgow.

November 1<sup>st</sup> 2013

I submit a ten-page scene to the Playwrights' Scotland Studio's Stage to Page monthly script readings.

November 5<sup>th</sup> 2013

Kirsty Williams agrees to look at my scripts. I send her copies of *Fox's Children* – a longer version of *A Subtle Resistance*, to be submitted as part of my PhD.

November 5<sup>th</sup> 2013

I fill in my Intention to Submit form for January 9<sup>th</sup> 2014.

November 12<sup>th</sup> 2013

Friends House London (the main organisational point of Quakers in Britain) requests an audio recording of *A Subtle Resistance* to be sent out to all British Quaker Meeting Houses as a World War I educational resource.

August – November 2013

I work on a first draft of new play *Portlagin*; a Scottish dialect monologue for one woman, concentrating on creating the voice of a Scottish woman. It's a really useful process for me, looking at ideas around my own feelings of identity, as well as allowing me to explore a writing voice I hadn't used to its fullest extent before.

November 25<sup>th</sup> 2013

Kirsty Williams provides really useful and positive feedback on *Fox's Children*, requests that I send her my other plays, and offers to meet for a more in-depth discussion about the process of becoming involved in writing and editing BBC Radio Drama.

December 4<sup>th</sup> 2013

I complete a new draft of *Lorenzo Amoruso is a Catholic Too*.

December 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013 – I meet with Kirsty Williams, who provides me with thorough, excellent feedback on *Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic Too*, and its potential as a radio play. She advises me on whom to contact, and offers her assistance in talking to staff at BBC Radio at Pacific Quay.

Meeting with Kirsty is a key point in my learning curve as a writer, because she points me in the direction of a whole circle of writers who write in ways I'd find useful to learn from. She also gives me a massive confidence boost in the sense that her enthusiasm for my scripts, and her in-depth analysis of each of them, encourages me to think more seriously about writing for radio, in a way I hadn't properly considered before.

## Supporting Evidence for Portfolio

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**from: Phil Mann**

**reply-to:**

**to:**

**date: 1 January 2011 14:48**

**subject: The International Student Playscript Competition Shortlist**

Dear entrants,

If you are reading this message, I would like to personally, and on behalf of the World Student Drama Trust, congratulate you on making the SHORTLIST for the 2010 International Student Playscript Competition.

The plays shortlisted at this stage are, in no particular order:

Cath Nichols - Birdie

Georgina Burns - Reckless Abandon

Jac Olaf Husebo - Kitty Litter

Katherine Lyall-Watson - Motherland

Caroline Mentiplay - Toxing It

Anthony Khaseria - Bye Bye Billie Blues

Melissa Bubnic - Beached

Laura Neal - Killing Jonathan

Asim Khan - Amateur Dramatics of Misfit Insomniacs

**Morven Hamilton - Notes**

Jacqueline McCarrick - Leopoldville

Anthony Kautzman - Coyote

Seamus Collins - Please Patricia

Carla Neuss - Unnamed

Ollie Jones - Daisy Cutter

The standard of entries has been incredibly high and your writing has been selected out of nearly 300 qualifying competitors. You should congratulate yourselves even on coming this far. In the coming weeks, we will be selecting a few of finalists before the winner is announced. You should prepare yourselves at this time to attend the National Student Drama Festival (<http://www.nsdf.org.uk>) as per rules of the competition. Your free ticket to this event is part of the prize you are now one step closer to, where - should you win - you will experience an intensive week of workshops, performances, drama criticism and social events where you can meet and interact with hundreds of like-minded individuals. But most of all, the NSDF will showcase your play, performed as a rehearsed reading with actors taken from the body of attendees and directed by myself. The winner will be presented with the award in a ceremony on the last day of the festival and invited to keep a daily diary of their

experiences which will be printed in the Festival companion magazine Noises Off.

Of course, if you are not successful in winning the competition you should consider attending the NSDF if at all possible. It is how myself, and many other professionals have started their careers in theatre, TV and film and I cannot recommend it highly enough.

If you have any queries at this stage you can find my contact details at the end of the e-mail. Good luck for the final stages of the competition. I look forward to meeting the winner later this year.

Warmest regards,

Phil Mann  
ISPC Producer

**from: Phil Mann**  
**reply-to:**  
**to:**  
**date: 17 February 2011 12:32**  
**subject: The International Student Playscript Competition Finalists**

Dear entrants,

We'd like to thank you for entering the International Student Playscript Competition this year. Unfortunately you have not been successful in being taken forward to the final round. However, I would like to congratulate you on coming this far and recommend that you enter next year - you may enter your same script, making any additions you deem necessary or an entirely new work.

We'd invite you to credit your work as "Shortlisted for the International Student Playscript Competition" should you mention it in the future in biographical information, and where possible if you could link to the website of the ISPC, we'd be very grateful.

Thank you all so much for your hard work and excellent writing. The entries were all of such high quality as to make our decision very difficult and I look forward to seeing your work produced professional in the future, as it no doubt will. I would also like to thank you on behalf of our finalist team, playwright April D'Angelis and Dr Zois Pigadas from East15 Acting School who judged this round. Myself, Peter Thomson and Clive Wolfe also extend our utmost thanks and gratitude for making this a milestone year which has broken all previous records.

If you are interested in the further stages of the ISPC, or if you'd like to come to the National Student Drama Festival you can find out more information at [www.nsd.org.uk](http://www.nsd.org.uk). At the NSDF, I am also editor of the in-house magazine that is

produced daily. We'd warmly welcome any shortlisted ISPC candidate to the volunteer editorial staff. The NSDF is a great way to launch your career and improve your skills and understanding of stagecraft with daily workshops, networking events, performances, in-depth discussions, theatre criticism and social evenings all dedicated to you, the students who will be the next generation of theatre-makers. If you'd like more information about the NSDF and the ISPC working together and in the future, or to find out more about the Noises Off magazine, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me.

Warmest regards,

Phil Mann  
ISPC Producer

**from:** ged cooper  
**to:** ged cooper  
**date:** 7 January 2011 14:32  
**subject:** Script factor space

Hi All,

We have a space for the Script factor event on Feb 1st at City Screen - 15 mins open theme - please let me know if you're interested.

Also check out this link for news of a great event for SY members at WYP -

<http://uk.mg40.mail.yahoo.com/dc/launch?.gx=1&.rand=ae2ma47p5sa6s>

- and watch this space for news about Yorkwrite at YTR in June - details to follow...

And a v happy new Year to all!

Ged

**from:** Morv Hamilton  
**to:** ged cooper  
**date:** 7 January 2011 18:57  
**subject:** Re: Script factor space  
**mailed-by:** googlemail.com

Hi Ged,

I'd be interested in the Script Factor opening - is it still available?

Morven

**from:** ged cooper  
**to:** Morv Hamilton  
**date:** 9 January 2011 16:07  
**subject:** Re: Script factor space  
**Signed by:**

Hi Morv,

Theme now decided - it's 'Writing for children' - you ok with that?

Best,  
Ged

**from: ged cooper**  
**to: morvchamilton**  
**pete goodland**  
**paul osborne**  
**Charlotte Court**

**cc: beryl nairn**  
**date: 3 March 2011 15:53**  
**subject: Script Factor - Writing for Children - April 7th**  
**Signed by:**

Hi Writers,

You are the 5 writers who are putting in scripts for the next Script factor - nb at City Screen not Studio!

This is just to remind you that the theme is 'Writing for Children' so you shd definitely come and listen to the master - Mike Kenny talking to the branch on that very subject next Mon March7th - at YTR studio - free admittance but you have to book tickets at the box office.

Please can you confirm with me asap that you all still want the place!

All best,

Ged

**from: ged cooper**  
**to: ged cooper**  
**date: 28 March 2011 16:18**  
**subject: Last Script factor before the all-winners' final!**  
**Signed by:**

It's almost here... it's at City Screen at 7.30 on Thursday 7th April...

5 writers - Morv Hamilton, Pete Goodland, Paul Osborne, Vicki Hill and Helen Crawford present their pieces on a theme of 'Writing for Children' - inspired by



the wonderful Mike Kenny. Who will be the last to go through to the final? Sara Murphy hosts and your vote could make all the difference!

And we've got news for you... Burgher Hall and Yorkwrite to name but two! Come along and join in the fun and be part of York's lively stage-writing scene.

See you there!

Ged

**from:** YSCP  
**to:** YSCP  
**date:** 8 April 2011 09:07  
**subject:** Bcc: SF Last night's winner - Morv Hamilton / Six Lips Theatre / Vixen 101

A huge 'thank you' to everyone who came down to Script Factor last night! All the scripts (written for children) were so good - and the acting so brilliant - that it was hard to choose a winner. In the end it was Morv Hamilton's tale of the hedgehog 'Smog' which stole our hearts and votes! She joins Daniel Meyers, Hannah Davies, Jean Harrod & Graham Sanderson at the All Winners' Final Monday 18th July.

Date: Mon 18 Jul  
Time: 7.45pm  
Performance Venue: Studio  
Tickets: £5, £4 SY and YSCP members  
[www.yorktheatreroyal.co.uk](http://www.yorktheatreroyal.co.uk)

If you'd like to put in a script for a future Script Factor event, please email Ged Cooper (Co-ordinator Script Yorkshire, York Branch) and she'll add your name to the list!  
[gedcooper3@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:gedcooper3@yahoo.co.uk)

For more information please see our branch page on the Script Yorkshire website  
[www.scriptyorkshire.org.uk](http://www.scriptyorkshire.org.uk)

Or visit us on Facebook (just type in Script Yorkshire York Branch)

**from:** YSCP  
**to:** **morvchamilton**  
**Daniel Meyers**  
**Hannah Davies**  
**Jean Harrod**  
**Graham Sanderson**  
**cc:** **Mike Oakes**  
**Ged cooper**  
**date:** 20 April 2011 17:30  
**subject:** **Update: Script Factor All Winners' Final 2011 18th July!**

Dear SYY Finalists,  
I have pleasure in providing some more information for you to digest!

As soon as possible (but don't panic!) please provide:

Title of script  
Catchy 'pitch' for your script (see last year's programme)  
Your biog (very short - see last year's programme)  
Cast list - once cast (see below)

SYF Final - Guidelines...

- \* Your entry to be 15 minutes long (with a minute's grace before being 'gonged' out!)
- \* Open theme of your choice (can be a new script, or your previous SF entry).
- \* Number of actors of your choice.
- \* You can cast the actors yourself, or email YSCP [yscp@berylnairn.plus.com](mailto:yscp@berylnairn.plus.com) for assistance. You will have the final decision over choice of cast.
- \* Actors can appear in a max of 2 scripts.
- \* Writers to provide enough hard copies of the script for the actors to have one each. A suggestion is to highlight the individual character name for each personal script. This makes it easier for the actors to read.
- \* To keep it fair, but more polished than the regular SF events, actors mustn't see the scripts in advance, except at the designated rehearsal slots.

Designated rehearsal slots:

I have booked \*Clementhorpe Community Centre Sunday 17th July from 2pm-5pm. Each writer will have 1/2 hour with their cast - slots to be negotiated between writers and your casts. (Short 10 min gap in between for changeover time)

2.00-2.30  
2.40-3.10  
3.20-3.50  
4.00-4.30  
4.40-5.10

\*Clementhorpe Community Centre Lower Ebor St York, North Yorkshire YO23 1AY (off Clementhorpe). You can 'Google' for directions & map. Parking available at Bishopthorpe Road car park near Sainsbury's. On street parking near venue is free on Sundays.

We will also be approaching York Theatre Royal to allow each writer & their cast equal time in the Theatre Studio - on the evening of the Final on 18th July - hopefully starting around 5pm. To be confirmed.

For those who haven't already had your head shots taken :) Mike Oakes will be liaising with you in steady time to arrange this.  
Mike Oakes <[mjoakes@talktalk.net](mailto:mjoakes@talktalk.net)>

Once again - thank you for your contribution to Script Yorkshire York Branch!  
Cheers from Beryl & Ged.

**from:** ged cooper  
**reply-to:** ged cooper  
**to:** ged cooper  
**date:** 19 July 2011 19:22  
**subject:** Sf winner and SY social next Weds  
**Signed by:**

Hi All,

First of all congrats to Morven who won last night's Script factor grand final - as many of you know! Great to see lots of you there. Commiserations to the other four writers who gave us such an excellent evening's entertainment - Liz Wilson, CEO of YTR said she thought it was the best yet! Script Factor resumes in September - all places already taken for that one I'm afraid! (But let me know if you'd like to go on the waiting list.)

Cheers!

Ged

**From the York Press:**

[http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/leisure/theatre/9148269.Review\\_\\_Script\\_Factor\\_All\\_Winners\\_Final\\_York\\_Theatre\\_Royal/](http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/leisure/theatre/9148269.Review__Script_Factor_All_Winners_Final_York_Theatre_Royal/)

**Review: Script Factor All-Winners Final, York Theatre Royal**

SCRIPT Yorkshire's showcase for new writers played to a packed Studio Theatre.

Winners of five previous rounds created a 15-minute original piece, performed by members of the York Settlement Players, with just one day's rehearsal.

Pack Up, by Hannah Davies, was a monologue by a female singleton, asked to be a godmother by her best friend.

From initial disbelief and boosted ego that comes with the request, to an over-confidence which leads to an unforgivable lapse of judgement, the storytelling was gripping, honest and believable.

Comic-drama Late Rooms involved three friends on a school trip, listening to inappropriate behaviour in the next hotel room. Writer Morven Hamilton showed an excellent ear for dialogue, and the foulmouthed childish bickering rang true without feeling scripted.

Grandma's 80th Birthday, by Jean Harrod, was the broadest of the five pieces, and the cast of six recreated a drunken family gathering well. Tensions simmered

between various family members, but ultimately the shock announcement at the climax felt rushed and unimportant.

Zoo Tomorrow, by Daniel Meyers, was a touching, emotional tale of loss, disguised as a very funny and honest argument between a recently separated couple. Meyers' writing caught the frustrations of trying to fix a long-term relationship after its dissolution, and performers Anna Rogers and Richard Johnston pulled off three roles with enthusiasm that caused much discussion afterwards.

Sub-Plot, by Graham Sanderson, was a deliberately Pinter-esque sketch in which a man and woman talk about their longing, needs and fears with each other, disguising their conversation in gardening terms.

In the end, Morven Hamilton's Late Rooms won the audience vote, with Sub-Plot coming in a close second – so close, two recounts were needed, but the real winners were the audience.

**from: Morv Hamilton**  
**to:**  
**date: 14 January 2011 13:44**  
**subject: Entry for Ronald Duncan Playwriting Competition**  
**mailed-by:**

Hi there,

I'm writing to you to submit my play Notes for the Ronald Duncan Playwriting Competition. I'm a PhD playwriting student in the Theatre department at the University of York, this is my first play, and I haven't had anything performed professionally yet. I've included a treatment of the play with this email, as well as two sample scenes from different points in the script. I hope you'll be able to consider me, and thanks for the opportunity!

Yours sincerely,  
Morven Hamilton

2 attachments — Download all attachments  
Treatment - Notes by Morven Hamilton.docx  
13K View Download  
Sample Scenes - Notes by Morven Hamilton.docx  
15K View Download

**from: Colin Lewisohn**  
**to:**  
**date: 18 January 2011 14:56**  
**subject: Playwriting Competition**

Morv,

Thanks for your entry. I will let you know how you have got on after 23rd March.

Colin Lewisohn  
Encore Theatre

**from: Colin Lewisohn**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**date: 27 March 2011 14:29**  
**subject: The Ronald Duncan**

Dear Playwright,

Unfortunately your entry for the 2011 Ronald Duncan Playwriting Competition has not been selected for further consideration. We understand your natural disappointment.

Colin Lewisohn writes: Whilst the ten qualifying entries stood out the standards were higher than we expected. We would also point out that judging entries is a subjective process and that this fact needs to be borne in mind by both the successful and the unsuccessful.

Jonathan Hall writes: The immediate, most noticeable thing to both of us was the high standard of the entries. Speaking as a writer who has entered competitions and is very used to reading sentences like this I can only say to you it's true. Many, many more entries could have been usefully developed over and above the ten we finally selected. It really wasn't a case of 'what was wrong' with entries, so much as some entries simply grabbed our attention and imagination more than others. I'm quite prepared to say a different set of judges would have selected ten quite different pieces. And I can say hand on heart as a writer who's very used to having to do this: don't give up. Carry on developing your work. Find people to read it aloud to you: it really is worthwhile doing.

Both of us made the following comments about your entry:

#### Notes

Like the premise of a singing group (although that presents a cast with particular challenge)- it's an idea that's well worth developing, On reading it we felt the characters needed greater differentiation than was apparent in the extract; i.e. Lydia and Olly came across as very similar in the way they were written. However some funny lines (Sibelius and sex!) made us feel this is a project well worth continuing with.

So do keep writing and do consider another entry in 2012. We will send you an email advertising the next competition when it's launched in February 2012.

With very best wishes,

Colin Lewisohn  
Encore Drama  
[www.encore01.com](http://www.encore01.com)

**from:** Morv Hamilton  
**to:**  
**date:** 21 January 2011 00:15  
**subject:** Emerge Writers Application  
**mailed-by:**

Dear Ms Weyman,

I'm writing to you in application for the Emerge Writers' Attachment Scheme. I think I've attached everything you asked for in the application form, but if there's anything else you need from me, please don't hesitate to contact me: my mobile number is [REDACTED], my email address is mh560@york.ac.uk, and my postal address is [REDACTED] I hope to hear from you soon - thanks for the opportunity!

Yours sincerely,  
Morven Hamilton

4 attachments — [Download all attachments](#)

[CV - Morven Hamilton.doc](#)

38K [View](#) [Download](#)

[Equal Opportunities Form - Morven Hamilton.docx](#)

30K [View](#) [Download](#)

[Writing sample - Morven Hamilton.docx](#)

22K [View](#) [Download](#)

[Emerge Writers Application Form - Morven Hamilton.docx](#)

260K [View](#) [Download](#)



**from: Ruth Weyman**  
**to: Ruth Weyman**  
**date: 1 February 2011 12:39**  
**subject: Unicorn / Birmingham Rep EMERGE Writers' Attachment Programme**  
**mailed-by: unicorntheatre.com**

Thank you for submitting your application for the Unicorn / Birmingham Rep EMERGE Writers' Attachment Programme.

We have been delighted with the response, receiving over 260 applications. We are now shortlisting and aim to inform all applicants of the results by the beginning of March. Because of the number of applications, we're sorry that we will not be able to offer individual feedback to writers who applied. As you can imagine, with only four attachments to offer, we are going to have very difficult choices to make. It looks likely that we could fill the places available many times over with the quality of the applications that have come in. Even if applicants are unsuccessful on this occasion, we will let people know about any other similar opportunities that come up at either theatre. Many thanks again for taking the time and trouble to apply.

Best wishes,  
Ruth

Ruth Weyman  
Artistic Coordinator

Direct line: 020 7645 0518 [www.unicorntheatre.com](http://www.unicorntheatre.com)

**from:** Morv Hamilton  
**to:** newsjack@bbc  
**date:** 3 February 2011 10:51  
**subject:** Sketch submission - Morven Hamilton - 'A Small World'  
**airplane sketch**  
**mailed-by:**

Hi there,

I'm writing to you to submit my sketch, A Small World, for consideration for the next Newsjack broadcast. I hope I've supplied everything you asked for on the website, but if not, please do get in touch!

Yours,  
Morven Hamilton

Morven Hamilton - 'A Small World' airplane sketch.docx  
24K View Download

**from:** NewsJack  
**reply-to:** NewsJack  
**to:** Morv Hamilton  
**date:** 3 February 2011 11:05  
**subject:** Newsjack (Auto Reply Message)

Thanks for submitting to Newsjack.

Your submission will be read and if your material is recorded for the show we will be in touch. However, due to the volume of submissions we get we are unable to respond to everyone individually.

For the latest updates subscribe to our Twitter feed at [www.twitter.com/newsjackbbc](http://www.twitter.com/newsjackbbc).

All the best,

The Newsjack Team

**from:** Morv Hamilton  
**to:** scriptspace  
**date:** 14 January 2011 18:02  
**subject:** Entrant for Script Space IV - 'Notes' by Morven Hamilton  
**mailed-by:**

Hi there,

This is my first play, Notes, and I'd really appreciate your consideration in Script Space IV. If you need anything else from me at all, my contact number is [REDACTED], my postal address is [REDACTED] and my email address is mh560@york.ac.uk.

Thanks in advance,  
Morven Hamilton

Notes.pdf  
606K View Download

**from:** scriptspace  
**to:** Morv Hamilton  
**date:** 14 January 2011 21:55  
**subject:** Re: Entrant for Script Space IV - 'Notes' by Morven Hamilton

Hi there,

Many thanks for this: looking forward to it.

Regards,  
Sophie

**from:** scriptspace  
**to:** Morv Hamilton  
**date:** 23 March 2011 14:49  
**subject:** Re: Entrant for Script Space IV - 'Notes' by Morven Hamilton

Hi there,

Thanks so much for your entry to script space iv. I'm afraid your play didn't make it into the final line-up, this time, but I do appreciate your sending it in and enjoyed reading it - enjoyed is a trite word...but I did.

Best wishes with your writing, and thanks again,  
Sophie

**from: Hannah Rodger**  
**to:**  
**date: 7 February 2011 16:36**  
**subject: Future Talent Award Finalists**  
**mailed-by:**

Dear writers,

Thank you very much for submitting to Future Talent Award 2011.  
If you haven't heard from us in the last week I'm afraid you weren't successful  
this time, however we'd like to extend a large thank you to you all for submitting.

The standard of entries was really high this year and the reading and judging  
process involved some very hard decisions.  
The finalists and shortlisted writers have now been announced here;  
[http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/writersroom/2011/02/future\\_talent\\_award.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/writersroom/2011/02/future_talent_award.shtml)

We'd like to wish you all the best with your writing and hope you will continue  
to submit your work to our unsolicited system in the future.  
Best wishes Hannah

x

**from: Morv Hamilton**  
**to: info**  
**date: 8 February 2011 00:43**  
**subject: Work Experience Enquiry**  
**mailed-by:**

Hi there,

I'm writing to ask whether or not there's any possibility that the Paper Birds can take people on for work experience? I'm a first year Theatre PhD student at the University of York, and I'm looking to get some experience with any theatre companies I can. I live in York and don't need travel expenses, so I'm happy to come in unpaid for however long you would have me, even if it's just for one day. If you could get back to me and let me know, I'd really appreciate it. In case it helps, I've attached a copy of my CV for your consideration.

Thanks in advance,  
Morven Hamilton

CV - Morven Hamilton.doc  
38K View Download

**from: Jemma Mc Donnell**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**date: 8 February 2011 13:39**  
**subject: Re: PR Enquiry**

Hello Morven

It might be possible for you to come and work with us to support the show we are about to take on tour. I could give you a list of possible dates that you could work with us in and around Yorkshire if you are still interested? Maybe you could come and meet with us this Thursday or Friday to discuss?

Jemma Mc Donnell  
Artistic Director  
The Paper Birds

**from: Morv Hamilton**  
**to: papatango.theatre**  
**date: 16 February 2011 15:15**  
**subject: Submission for the Papatango New Writing Competition**  
**mailed-by:**

Hi there,

I'm writing to you to ask if you would consider my play, Notes, in Papatango's competition. I've attached a copy of the play itself, but if there's anything else you need from me, please don't hesitate to get in touch either by email or by phone on [REDACTED]. My mail address is [REDACTED].

Best wishes,  
Morven Hamilton

Notes.pdf  
606K View Download

**from: Papatango Theatre**  
**to:**  
**bcc:**  
**date: 23 June 2011 19:35**  
**subject: The Final 25!**  
**Signed by:**

Hello,

Thank you so much for your entry into the 2011 Papatango New Writing Festival in association with The Finborough Theatre. The standard has been extraordinarily high and we have received over 600 scripts.

We are announcing our long list of the final 25 on our Facebook page at the beginning of next week. You can be the first to see it by "liking" us and we'll send you a message. Search Papatango Theatre Company on Facebook or follow the link at our website. If you aren't a facebook user we will announce the long list later on in the week on our website.

We will announce our shortlist of the final 8 in two weeks and the winning plays at the end of July.

Anyway back to thrashing out the final few places on a truly incredible long list,  
All the best,

Sam Donovan

**from: Morv Hamilton**

**to: newsjack@bbc**  
**date: 7 March 2011 18:51**  
**subject: Sketch submission - Morven Hamilton - 'Misreading' book publisher sketch**  
**mailed-by:**

Hi there,

Just wanted to submit this for the next possible Newsjack broadcast!

Thanks,  
Morven Hamilton

Morven Hamilton - 'Misreading' book publisher sketch.docx  
19K View Download

**from: Morv Hamilton**  
**to: info@gardnerherrity**  
**date: 21 March 2011 16:17**  
**subject: FAO Robin Soans**  
**mailed-by:**

Hi there,

I'm writing to you in the hope that you'll be able to put me in touch with Robin Soans, if Gardner Herrity still acts as his agent? If there's any way you could forward this on to him, I'd be really grateful!

Dear Mr Soans,

My name's Morven Hamilton and I'm a PhD student studying verbatim playwriting at the University of York. This is a bit of a long shot, but reading your Arab-Israeli Cookbook was what got me into this area of study, and now I'm embarking on my first verbatim project of my own with my department's support. I've read all your works (including your contribution to Verbatim, Verbatim) and I wondered if there's any more advice you can give me on how you went about your writing process? Any tips you've got would really help; I'm just embarking on the first stages of research and interviews for my first verbatim project in my department, and it would be great to hear how other people have gone about it. If there's any chance you could get back to me, even if it takes a few months, I'd really appreciate it.

Thanks in advance,  
Morven Hamilton

**from: Robin Soans**  
**to:**  
**date: 27 March 2011 21:40**  
**Signed by:**

Dear Morven,

I'm mega busy at the moment both acting and writing, but I would be delighted to meet later on and answer any questions.

I start another long project at LAMDA in May...perhaps you would like to come into rehearsal one day and see the whole process in action.

After 14th May I have my evenings free so we could meet up for supper.

Yours  
Robin.



**from: Jemma Mc Donnell**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**date: 22 March 2011 16:24**  
**subject: tomorrow**

Hello Darling

I just wanted to check if you are coming to Feminist Futures tomorrow? If you are I wondered if you would mind helping us out as Ive said we will be tweeting live updates of the discussions unfolding- and wondered if I bring my laptop if you might be able to do this for us?

Also Ive been on selling Oxford today- doing the uni's and theatre companies and just to give you a heads up I found this list and have emailed them all...

If you are able to come tomorrow- can you let me know and do you think you might be able to arrive for 4.30pm?

Thanks darling! xxxx

**from: Jemma Mc Donnell**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**date: 29 March 2011 20:22**  
**subject: NT**

Hi Darling

So the National Theatre week is 11th- 15th April. It would be great if you can join us - Let us know how it looks and we will book you a train ticket!

Xxxx

**from: Elle Moreton**  
**to: morvchamilton**  
**date: 31 March 2011 10:40**  
**subject: NT**

Hi Morv,

So glad you can join us at The National!! Jem tells me you have accommodation sorted which is fab. We'll be working Monday to Friday, 9.30 - 6.30 w/c 11th March. xxx

Elle Moreton  
Creative Producer  
The Paper Birds Theatre Company

**from: admin@bushgreen**  
**to:**  
**date: 9 April 2011 23:00**  
**subject: Bush Theatre script submission**

Dear Morven,

Thank you for sending your play to the Bush Theatre.

Here's what happens now...

We read every play we receive. If your play is not for us we'll let you know as quickly as we can. We aim to give you a decision as soon as is practically possible, given the high number of submissions we receive.

Some plays we'll pass on to our panel of six creative associate directors. We meet with them once a month to discuss the plays and writers we're particularly interested in. We think it's important that your play is read by a professional director, so even if we decide not to produce it here, a director could become an advocate for you or your play elsewhere.

At that point we'll be in touch to let you know if we're going to take your play forward or not. We aim to always give you a decision within eight weeks. At any of these stages we might suggest you publish your play on bushpress if you have not already done so in order to increase the opportunity of your play being produced elsewhere. Plays we are particularly impressed by are advocated for by the theatre with a bush pick.

Very best wishes

Bush Literary The Bush Theatre

**from: admin@bushgreen**  
**to:**  
**date: 3 May 2011 12:11**  
**subject: Your Bush Theatre Submission**

Dear Morven

Thank you for sending your play Smog to the Bush Theatre via bushgreen.

It was read by our Creative Associates and was very much enjoyed, however after careful consideration we are unable to offer to develop your play further at The Bush as a production.

Unfortunately we no longer offer writers feedback, as we believe it is unfair to offer you our notes unless we are going to stage a full production.

We developed bushgreen as a tool to allow you the chance to connect with other like-minded people so that you might be able to find feedback or potential development through other members of the site.

We wish you luck in finding a producer elsewhere. Thank you for thinking of us at the Bush Theatre and using bushgreen.

Very best wishes,

Bush Literary

The Bush Theatre

**from: Workin Process**  
**to:**  
**bcc:**  
**date: 16 May 2011 11:52**  
**subject: Workin Process - Dramatic Verse Submissions**  
**Signed by:**

Dear all,

Just a quick note to say we are considering all your wonderful submissions and should have fixed what we are able to include into our night on 9th June by this time next week.

Best Wishes  
Dan Winder

**from: Workin Process**  
**to:**  
**cc:**  
**bcc:**  
**date: 25 May 2011 03:57**  
**subject: Workin Process 2 - Dramatic Verse**  
**Signed by:**

Dear friend,

Sorry it has taken us longer than expected to get back to you all. Due to the openness of the submissions criteria we were left with an extraordinary range of material.

Unfortunately we have not found a place for your work as part of the June 10th Workin Process Dramatic Verse.

In the explanation that follows you will hopefully get a greater sense of our selection process.

The submissions request was really just a question; what is dramatic verse? and what form would a modern verse for theatre take?

Though we have not found any concrete answers, all your submissions helped to clarify what we feel, as a company, dramatic verse needs, as opposed to verse on the page. Myself and a group of actors and performers sat around this weekend reading out as many of the submissions as possible and the same issues came up again and again:

On the one hand - Does the work have immediacy, do we get to hear the characters living in the moment, are the words mostly written in the first person,

does the piece have a clear character voice, is there a dramatic conflict, is there a dramatic journey for the character or characters?

And on the other hand - Does the work have poetic form, no matter how loose? Does the work explore the nature of language? Do the words have the condensed power of poetry?

The quality of submissions was extraordinary and our conversations were rarely about the intrinsic standard of the writing but instead usually about whether, in a practical sense, we felt the pieces were performable; and not just if they were performable, but also if the act of performance in a theatrical context was likely to bring something more to the piece than a straight reading.

As we were lucky enough to get submissions from some of the best playwrights and poets across the country we do hope you will continue to discuss, engage and challenge us and others to better clarify exactly what modern dramatic verse might be.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO ATTEND ON 10th JUNE JUST DROP US A LINE TO ASK FOR A COMPLIMENTARY TICKET AS A SMALL THANK YOU FOR THE TIME YOU HAVE TAKEN IN SUBMITTING YOUR WORK.

Also, on the night of the 10th, having already got copies of your work which were printed off for the reading process, I would like to leave a table full of all the work submitted for people to browse through and take in the interval. If you would not like your work to be part of this pile then please let me know.

Best wishes

Daniel Winder

**from: Morv Hamilton**  
**to: littlepiecesofgold**  
**date: 1 June 2011 14:23**  
**subject: Writing Entry**  
**mailed-by:**

Hi there,

I'm writing to you to enter my play Smog into the Little Pieces of Gold competition - I hope you'll still be able to take my entry, since I found the competition on the BBC Writersroom and wasn't sure if the deadline was before or on June 1st. I'd be really, really grateful if you could still consider it!

Synopsis:

A play for children aged 0-5. Smog is a very small hedgehog, but she's got some very big spikes. After ruining her friend's birthday party by bursting the bouncy castle with them, she sets out to try to get rid of the spikes. Can she really be an unspiky hedgehog?

Writer's Bio:

Morven Hamilton is a 23 year old first year postgrad at the University of York, studying for a PhD in Playwriting, with an MA in Theatre and a BA (Hons) in Politics. Her first play, Notes, was longlisted for the NSDF's International Student Playwriting Competition in January 2011. Smog is her second finished piece.

I hope this is all okay, but if there's anything else you need from me, please just let me know! Hope to hear from you soon! In case you need other contact details, my phone number is \_\_\_\_\_.

Morven

**from: Pentabus Theatre**  
**to:**  
**date: 1 July 2011 12:19**  
**subject: Pentabus Theatre**

Good afternoon

We would like to thank you for entering our recent We Are Here competition.

We are delighted to announce that from over 250 plays we have chosen SHOOT DORIS DAY by Katherine Chandler as the winner, with THE BOY IN THE PHOTOGRAPH by Becky Prestwich as the runner up.

We will start work on developing SHOOT DORIS DAY in the autumn, in conjunction with the SHERMAN.

We are so sorry that your entry was not successful this time but we would like to thank you for taking part, and for your interest in Pentabus.

We would like to keep in touch with you, so are giving you the opportunity to be included on our database. If you agree to this, we will contact you from time to time to keep you up to date with our activities, particularly any that are relevant to writers. Please let me know if you would like us to do this - just reply to this email with a "yes" at the top.

Would you like to receive occasional emails or postal notices from other arts organisations about events and activities that may be of interest to you? If you would, please reply to this email with a tick or a "yes" between the brackets in the sentence below. If you do, you can opt out at any time by emailing us.

We will look forward to hearing from you.  
Thank you once again for your entry in WE ARE HERE.

With kind regards

Jenny James

**From the York Press:**

[http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/leisure/theatre/9117715.Take\\_part\\_in\\_Upstage\\_Centre\\_Youth\\_Theatre\\_s\\_summer\\_play/](http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/leisure/theatre/9117715.Take_part_in_Upstage_Centre_Youth_Theatre_s_summer_play/)

**Take part in Upstage Centre Youth Theatre's summer play**

3:26pm Friday 1st July 2011

UPSTAGE Centre Youth Theatre will mount a Shakespeare play in two weeks this summer under the direction of Mel Cook, former assistant director at the Royal Shakespeare Company.

“If you are between 8 and 25 years old, this is your chance to spend a fortnight rehearsing either *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* or *Macbeth* – we are yet to decide – and then perform it to a live audience at the end of the second week,” says Marketing and Press Officer Morven Hamilton.

“You’ll learn new skills, make new friends, hopefully build your confidence in performing and have lots of fun. We’re based at the Upstage Centre at 41 Monkgate, and we’d love you to come along.”

The play project will run from July 25 to August 5 with sessions every weekday from 9am to 4pm, culminating in a 7pm performance on the last day. The fee is £120 per participant, with a 50 per cent hardship discount available. You can sign up by filling out the registration form on the Upstage website, [upstagecentre.org.uk](http://upstagecentre.org.uk) and emailing it to [info@upstagecentre.org.uk](mailto:info@upstagecentre.org.uk)

**from: Morv Hamilton**  
**to: Elle Moreton**  
**date: 6 July 2011 14:17**  
**subject: Re: Thirsty?**  
**mailed-by:**

Hey Elle!

How are things going with Thirsty so far? Just wanted to check with you - do you need a hand at the Fringe this year? Just wondering since I live up there anyway so I've already got free accommodation with my parents and I'll already be around! Let me know.

Morven x

**from: Elle Moreton**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**cc: Jemma Mc Donnell**  
**date: 6 July 2011 15:40**  
**subject: Re: Thirsty?**

Morven my love, you are music to our ears!!

I've forwarded your email to Jemma who will be in touch asap!!!!!! xxx

Elle Moreton  
Creative Producer  
The Paper Birds Theatre Company

**from: Jemma Mc Donnell**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**cc: Elle Moreton**  
**date: 24 July 2011 10:22**  
**subject: Re: Thirsty?**

Hello Poppet!

Just wondered if you are free to help us with out tech/ get-in in Edinburgh on Monday 1st? It would be great if you are around to see how the set goes in an out as this is going to be one of the main challenges ( doing it in 10 mins!!!) also it might be nice for you to see how the lighting desk works so that you might be able to opp for us some days??? It starts at 10.30am on 1st but we will be there from 9.45am I would say- and its at the Pleasance Courtyard- do you know where that is? We should be done by 5pm. xxx



**from: Writersroom**  
**to:**  
**date: 18 July 2011 14:55**  
**subject: 'Get A Squiggle On'**

Dear Writers Many thanks for your submission to 'Get A Squiggle On'. Your script has been received and logged and our team of readers are now reading through all the entries. We hope to notify you all about the next stage of the competition by the end of July so please don't contact us about your entry until then.

If you are successful at the next stage of the competition your script will be second read by senior readers and writersroom staff and approximately 20-25 writers will be invited to a masterclass.

Please note the masterclass will be in early September - not at the end of August as advertised on our website. All the details of this masterclass will be sent to longlisted writers.

We've had an incredible response to this competition and wish you all the best of luck with your entry. Hannah x

**from: Robbie Swale**  
**to:**  
**date: 20 July 2011 15:55**  
**subject: RE: Marketing Internship**

Hi Morven,

Thanks for your application, and for letting us know about the 2nd August. Would you be available on Monday 1st August should we shortlist you for interview? I will have to check this with my colleague who will be with me on the panel, but should we shortlist you, we might well be able to interview on the Monday.

Best wishes,

Robbie Swale  
Centre Manager

**from: Robbie Swale**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**date: 5 August 2011 10:57**  
**subject: RE: Marketing Internship**

Dear Morven,

Thanks very much for coming to see us yesterday. We really enjoyed meeting you, and would like to offer you the post.

The start date would be 15th August, 2011, and at least initially, it would be useful for us if you were available to work Mondays and Tuesdays.

If you could email me back to confirm whether you would like to take the post, we will then have a chat next week about dates and things like that.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Best wishes,

Robbie Swale  
Centre Manager

**from: Morv Hamilton**  
**to:**  
**date: 11 August 2011 14:14**  
**subject: Writing**  
**mailed-by:**

Hi John!

Thanks for thinking of me, and sorry this has taken so long - I've attached you some of the stuff I could find on my computer. Basically, I got a new laptop recently and I haven't transferred a lot of the old stuff across, but what I've given you is:

- Smog, which is the piece I won my first heat of Script Factor with, which is a standalone piece for children under five.

- Notes, which is my first full-length play. It was shortlisted for the NSDF International Student Playwright Competition in January this year.

- Misreading and A Small World - these are two comedy sketches that I wrote during a masterclass that I won with Lawrence Marks and Maurice Gran, who wrote Goodnight Sweetheart

- Late Rooms, the original scene from the Script Factor final, and then Scene A, Scene B, and Scene C, which all come later on in the play.

Let me know if there's enough material there, or if you'd like me to send you some more?

Thanks again,  
Morven

8 attachments — [Download all attachments](#)

- Smog by Morven Hamilton-1.pdf  
528K [View](#) [Download](#)
- Notes.pdf  
606K [View](#) [Download](#)
- Misreading.pdf  
65K [View](#) [Download](#)
- Morven Hamilton - 'A Small World' airplane sketch.docx  
24K [View](#) [Download](#)
- Late Rooms.docx  
28K [View](#) [Download](#)
- Late Rooms - Scene A.docx  
86K [View](#) [Download](#)
- Late Rooms - Scene B.docx  
86K [View](#) [Download](#)

Late Rooms - Scene C.docx  
88K View Download

**from:**  
**to:**  
**cc:**  
**date: 11 August 2011 18:23**  
**subject: Re: Writing**

Dear Morven

Thanks for these, more than enough for the time being.

Enjoy Edinburgh

Kind regards

John

John R. Wilkinson  
Literary Consultant  
York Theatre Royal

**from:**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**cc: "John R. Wilkinson"**  
**date: 11 October 2011 20:58**  
**subject: Re: Pearson Playwrights' Scheme**

Dear Morven

As mentioned on the phone, here's the information on the Pearson Playwrights' Scheme. You don't need to do anything, just have a read and cross fingers. We have put you forward – submitting Notes – and we'll know by the end of the month/beginning of November if we've got anywhere with it. As I said also, it's a bit of a long shot – these schemes tend to be a little bit insular, but you never know.

Thanks

John

Pearson Playwrights Scheme

The Pearson Playwrights' Scheme is open to any theatre in the UK with a committed policy to new writing.

Once a year invitations are sent to the Artistic Directors of all UK theatres, especially those committed to new writing, inviting them to submit the work of any writer they consider to have promise. These scripts are then collated and circulated to members of the Panel working under their Chairman, Sir Richard Eyre CBE.

The Panel then meets to discuss the scripts and to decide which writers might benefit from the Scheme. Every year Pearson plc offers four bursaries, each worth £7000, plus another donation by the Peggy Ramsay Foundation. It should be emphasised that these bursaries are intended to benefit individual writers and not to fund workshops or similar projects. Nor should they be regarded as a substitute for writing commission fees. Scripts for musicals, adaptations and comedy revues are, regrettably, not eligible for these bursaries.

Writers selected are invited to meet the Panel, accompanied by a representative of the theatre proposing them, and the winners are notified the following day. Those who are successful are asked to take up their one year attachments as early in the year as possible. Three months after the attachment begins the theatre is required to submit a progress report on the writer and after nine months the writer is asked to report on his/her attachment. These reports are then circulated to the respective sponsors.

Each year the Catherine Johnson Award, worth £10000, is given to the writer of the Best Play, judged by same Panel as above. This award is open to all previous bursary winners one year after the completion of their attachments.

Past bursary winners under the Scheme include many of today's leading playwrights:- Howard Barker, David Edgar, Stephen Poliakoff, Alan Bleasdale, Joe Penhall, Sue Townsend, Catherine Johnson, Jim Cartwright, Lee Hall etc. A full list is available on application.

**from: Morv Hamilton**  
**to: 503five**  
**date: 12 August 2011 00:38**  
**subject: Application**

Hi there,

I'm writing to you to apply for the 503five programme, and I really hope you'll be able to consider my application. I've included everything you asked for on your website, but if there's anything else you need from me, please don't hesitate to contact me either by email or by phone ([REDACTED]). Attached are my answers to your questions, as well as a copy of my script Late Rooms, a fifteen minute opening scene, as a sample of my writing.

2. As a rough idea of what I'd like to write for you - I'm happy to write for anything at all, so I'll get involved in any prompt I'm given. Ideally, I'd like to develop the script contained in the sample I've sent you, looking at what happens when three 16 year olds find out their French teacher is having an affair with a girl in their class on the school trip to Paris. They're left to deal with it on their own - no-one else knows about it or knows that they know, so do they tell? How do they broach the subject with anyone else to find out if they do know? Do they even want to do that? I want to investigate whether they tell anyone about it, given the pressure on them not to. Do they choose to avoid the press swarming their houses, avoid the scandal, the reactions from their own parents, keep their heads down? Are they protecting their classmate? Even if they don't know her that well? On the other hand, do they toy with the idea that maybe they really should tell, because if it keeps going, are they partly to blame for keeping it quiet? Are they morally obligated to tell? I want to study their relationship over the year; three teenagers who're really only in this together because they have to be, because they happened to be in the same hotel room at the same time, and because it's a difficult thing to ignore.

3. I'm a 23 year old Glaswegian studying in York, and I'm currently in the first year of a PhD by Practice in Playwriting (writing three plays, rather than a dissertation) with the University of York's Theatre Department. This July, I was the winner of Script Yorkshire's six month long Script Factor competition - a five heat competition with a final where the scripts were performed and voted for by the audience and the directors of York Theatre Royal - and I was shortlisted for the NSDF's International Student Playwriting Competition this January, for my first full-length play Notes. That said, I haven't yet had anything supported or put on professionally with a theatre, either regionally or nationally, and Theatre503 would be such an opportunity for me in this respect. It would be something incredible to work with others like myself to develop our writing skills in the company of responsive and honest listeners, and to receive guidance from people with serious practical experience of what makes theatre captivating; what makes it brilliant.

I'd be thrilled to take part in this programme, and I really look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,  
Morven Hamilton

**from: Theatre 503**  
**to:**  
**date: 29 August 2011 13:38**  
**subject: Re: Application for 503 Five**

Dear Playwright,

Thank you for submitting your application for 503Five to us at Theatre 503. If you have not already sent us an example of your work, please do so. We look forward to reading your submission and will be in touch regarding your application in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Theatre503  
Literary Department

**from: 503 Literary Department**  
**to:**  
**bcc:**  
**date: 19 December 2011 19:45**  
**subject: 503 Five Process Update**

Dear Writer,

Thank you for applying for the 503 Five scheme at Theatre503.

As you will be aware there were 800 submissions for this scheme and unfortunately on this occasion your application has not been successful in being shortlisted.

Whilst we are unable to offer feedback on your application, Theatre503 are now aware of your work and are committed to staying in touch with as many writers as possible.

As usual the theatre is open to receiving new work at any point during the year, but as a voluntary organisation, dealing with all the scripts we receive can often take longer than expected. We encourage you to stay in touch with us by sending us work, inviting us to shows, or coming to us with any questions we may be able to help you with, but we ask that you are patient and understanding of the work

load that is often experienced at the theatre and our ability to cover all shows we are invited to, and/or respond to all emails. Be assured however, that we will endeavor to make sure that your work, or attempts to contact us, are not forgotten.

In order to be able to send out information about shows and events we are producing, to inform you of opportunities of getting involved in any number of ways with Theatre503, and to forward on writer opportunities from other organisations. we would like to keep your email as part of our writer database.

We will not pass on your email to anyone else without your permission, and we will not use it to forward information about shows from other organisations.

If you are interested in hearing about Theatre503: Shows, Writers' nights, Rapid Write Response nights, Writer's Group, Open Space events and numerous other opportunities associated with the theatre, we would strongly advise you remain on our database. However, should you wish to be removed from that database please contact us.

Yours Sincerely,

Steve Harper  
Literary Manager

--

Literary Department  
Theatre503  
Fearless New Writing



**from: Morv Hamilton**  
**to: littlepiecesofgold**  
**date: 16 September 2011 00:47**  
**subject: Re: Writing Entry**

Hi there,

I'm writing to enter my play Late Rooms into the Little Pieces of Gold competition, after reading about it on BBC Writersroom. I hope you'll be able to take a look, and I'd really appreciate it if you could consider me!

Synopsis:

Three teenagers, Becky, Stefan and Gordo are on a school trip to Paris. Becky thinks their room might be haunted, but the truth might just be worse.

Writer's Bio:

Morven is studying for a PhD in Playwriting at the University of York. Her previous work includes Notes (shortlisted for the NSDF International Student Playwriting Competition 2011) and Smog (Winner of Script Yorkshire's Script Factor).

Thanks in advance,  
Morven Hamilton

**from: Morv Hamilton**  
**to:**  
**date: 18 September 2011 23:10**  
**subject: Taleblazers**

Hi there!

I'm writing to you to submit my play Late Rooms for the Taleblazers event. I'd really appreciate it if you'd be able to consider my application, and I hope to hear from you soon!

Thanks in advance,  
Morven Hamilton

**from: Nicholas Ruben**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**date: 19 September 2011 11:05**  
**subject: Re: Taleblazers**

Dear Morven,

Thanks for submitting your play. We read everything we receive and will be in touch by the end of September.

Best

Nicholas

**from: Nicholas Ruben**  
**to:**  
**bcc:**  
**date: 23 September 2011 12:30**  
**subject: Taleblazers submissions**

Dear Writer,

Thank-you for taking the time and initiative to submit a play to Taleblazers. We were inundated with submissions this time around and attached some high-quality writing. We read over 200 submissions, and the standard of work was excellent. Ultimately however, we could only accept seven plays, and on this occasion I'm afraid we were unable to take your play further.

This does not mean we are not interested in your work. We keep all your details on a database in order to form a relationship with every writer that contacts us. We have to reject some of the submissions for a variety of reasons - whether that be production values, potential casting, or the company's own limitations. For these reasons some of the plays were rejected simply because we are not in a position to do the work justice.

We're passionate about supporting writers and Taleblazers is an ongoing project. Therefore we will keep your contact details on file for future initiatives - please do continue to apply to submissions because we are actively looking to form relationships with emerging playwrights.

Regards  
Nicholas Ruben

Blacklight Theatre

**from: Morv Hamilton**  
**to:**  
**date: 2 November 2011 11:14**  
**subject: Launch night submission**

Hi there,

I saw your advert for new writing, so I wanted to submit my work 'Late Rooms' - I hope you'll be able to consider it! The piece runs at just over 15 minutes, and it's for three actors aged 16/17. The piece can either be performed with props (two beds and a lamp) or without: in rehearsed readings in my university's theatre department, the feedback I've had from audiences is that they understood the setting without any props, so I'm perfectly happy for it to be performed very minimally.

In case you need information about me - I'm a 23 year old girl, studying for a PhD in Playwriting at the University of York, with no plays performed professionally yet. In July this year, I won Script Yorkshire's annual year-long competition with my fifteen minute piece 'Smog', and I was shortlisted for the NSDF's International Student Playwright Competition in January, for my first full-length play 'Notes'.

If there's anything else you'd like me to send you, please don't hesitate to contact me! My phone number is [REDACTED]

Thanks in advance,  
Morven Hamilton

**from:**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**date: 3 November 2011 12:58**  
**subject: RE: Launch night submission**

Thanks, we have received your play and look forward to reading it. Please be patient as there are a fair number to get through but you will be notified if you are successful within the month of December ready for the 2012 Launch Night - Let's Get Visceral.

If you don't hear from us all is not lost. We may be keeping your play on file for a future date, in which case you will be notified.

We value your support, so keep in touch.

All the best,

VISCERA

**from: Vicky Biles**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**date: 9 November 2011 17:50**  
**subject: RE: TakeOver**

Dear Morven

That's great. Thank you and I have a copy of your application. Might you be available to come and meet with us on Saturday 19th November at 5.30pm?

Many thanks

Vicky

**from: Vicky Biles**  
**to: matthew williams**  
**Morv Hamilton**  
**date: 21 November 2011 12:41**  
**subject: TakeOver**

Dear Matt and Morven

Congratulations to you both on being appointed General Managers for TakeOver.

The next Board meeting is Wednesday 30th November at 5.30pm. Can you come and do you want to meet me at 4.30pm to go through a few things?

Best wishes

Vicky

**from: Liam Evans-Ford**  
**to:**  
**date: 21 December 2011 11:47**  
**subject: Modern Mysteries**

Dear Morven,

Thank you for submitting a script for the Modern Mystery Competition which is running alongside the major re-staging of the plays in the Museum Gardens next year.

I'm very happy to tell you that your script has been chosen as one of the 6 winners to enter development with members of the Mystery 2012 team. My apologies that the news has arrived a little later than originally promised!

Your script was chosen from over 40 submissions and the final choice was made by Mike Kenny and Julia Davis – both of whom have a lot of experience with new writing. Your play was chosen for a number of reasons but as you'll know from the original brief – we were always running this project to allow writers development time with the pieces rather than just staging a first draft – the process is the main thing that we hope you'll gain from being one of the chosen writers.

I will be in touch during the new year regarding the start of a development process. I would like to highlight the first date booked in for a 'performed reading' of a second draft which is scheduled for Thursday 26th April at 7.30pm in City Screen Basement. This will allow each of the writers to hear their work in front of an audience ahead of developing a 3rd draft for a showing in August.

My details are below should you have any questions at this stage – otherwise I hope you have a good festive holiday and I look forward to speaking and working with you in the New-year. Congratulations!

Warm regards,

Liam

**from: Rebecca Stafford**  
**to: Morven Hamilton**  
**cc: "Liam Evans-Ford"**  
**date: 2 February 2012 12:23**  
**subject: Modern Mystery Winners - first writers' session**

Dear Modern Mystery Winners,

Now Liam has met with you all he is very keen to proceed with the development of your scripts. He would like to invite you to the first writer's session on Saturday 3rd March. This will start at 11am and last approximately 3hrs. Please

can you confirm to me if it is possible for you to attend. We can't wait to get started and are very excited at the prospect of the finished script.

Best Wishes

Rebecca Stafford  
Community Assistant to Liam Evans-Ford

**from: Rebecca Stafford**  
**to:**  
**date: 27 March 2012 10:09**  
**subject: Modern Mysteries - Phase 2**

Dear Modern Mystery Writers,

The time has now come where we are ready for the second draft of your script – exciting stuff! This is so we can continue with the preparation for the “Performed Readings” at York City Screen on the 26th April.

Liam will be taking two scripts to develop with actors, I shall be taking two scripts and finally Alex Wright (Associate Assistant Director of York Mystery Plays 2012) will be taking the final two.

It is worth mentioning that at this stage, we are not working to direct a stage version of the play. We will be working on finding the best way to ‘highlight’ and showcase your writing for the first public event.

Naturally we would be delighted if you can attend your scripts session but we are unable to change the dates specified below.

DATE	TITLE	LOCATION	TIME
03-Apr	Resurrection	Workshop 2/De Grey Rooms	6-9pm
10-Apr	Murmur	Workshop 1/ De Grey Rooms	6-9pm
10-Apr	Fields Of Gold	Kerrigan Room/ YTR	6-9pm
10-Apr	Refuge	Workshop 2/De Grey Rooms	6-9pm
12-Apr	The Creation	Billiard Room/De Grey House	6-9pm
12-Apr	Neither the Day nor The Hour	Workshop 1/ De Grey Rooms	6-9pm

The final requirement is naturally that I receive the second draft in advance of your scripts “workshop with directors”(If I have already received draft 2 thank you very much).

This really is exciting stuff and I can't quite believe how the time has flown by. The actors have all enjoyed the process and are extremely keen to follow the development further.

If you have anything you wish to discuss further then please just let me know.

Best Wishes

Rebecca Stafford

### **Modern Mystery Plays head for Galtres Festival.**

**27 Jan 2012**

From <http://www.galtresfestival.org.uk/news-item.cfm?newsid=118>

Galtres Festival has teamed up with the organisers of the York Mystery Plays to stage a series of modern takes on the ancient plays.

The festival, which runs in Crayke near York on the August bank holiday weekend, will be presenting prize-winning short plays written by York scriptwriters, based on the themes of the centuries-old mystery plays.

The medieval cycle of York Mystery Plays has been performed by the people of York across the centuries and is a world-famous part of the city's cultural heritage. From Creation to the Last Judgment, these plays form one of the greatest stories ever told. In summer 2012, the story of God, of man and woman and of the cosmic struggle between good and evil will be presented on an epic scale against the magnificent backdrop of St Mary's Abbey in York.

Galtres Festival falls on the final weekend of the York Mystery Plays, and the organisers have got together with Script Yorkshire and the York Settlement Players to bring modern versions of the plays to the festival. Each of the short plays is a winning entry from a scriptwriting competition run by the York branch of Script Yorkshire.

The scripts will be enacted by members of the York Settlement Players and other actors throughout the Galtres Festival weekend. "We're all really thrilled about the Modern Mysteries coming to Galtres," said Festival Director James Houston. "Galtres Festival draws heavily on the extraordinary creative talent in York and around, and each year showcases the most innovative and exciting music, theatre, and cabaret. We've worked hard to develop the quality of drama and storytelling at Galtres in recent years, and this collaboration with Script Yorkshire and the Mystery Plays will help us deliver an even better quality programme to our audience."

"Alongside the major re-staging of the York Mystery Plays at the Museum Gardens in August we were keen to find out some modern interpretations of the stories from emerging and established writers. This partnership with the Galtres Festival, a festival very much at the heart of its community, allows our script writers a unique opportunity to see their plays performed in a Festival setting," said Liam Evans-Ford, Community Producer for the York Mystery Plays.

Galtres Festival began life eight years ago as a small beer and cider festival, but has grown into a major three-day event with five music stages, attracting major bands like The Charlatans, The Lightning Seeds, Shed Seven, British Sea Power, the Levellers and others. It's set up very much as a family event, with a huge programme of activities and workshops for children and young people, as well as



a feast of quality local food and around 100 Yorkshire beers and ciders to choose from.

Script Yorkshire (York) is the local branch of Script Yorkshire, an organisation which exists to promote new writing for stage, screen, TV and radio in Yorkshire. SY arranges regular workshops with experienced writers, as well as similar activities. They also organise regular 'Script Factor' competitions in York, and the Modern Mysteries coming to Galtres Festival are the winning entries from a competition involving 30 York script-writers. "I loved it [Script Factor]," said one recent audience member, Rose Drew of Stairwell Books. "It was the most fun I've had in ages. It was Theatre In the Raw, so exciting. Better than some sort of improv theatre, but with that same edge of danger."

York Settlement Community Players, who will be presenting the Modern Mysteries at Galtres, is a thriving amateur theatre group at the heart of creative theatre in the city of York. As well as regular productions of modern and classical plays, they work closely with Script Yorkshire (York) and with York Theatre Royal to present new writing for the stage. Ged Cooper, co-ordinator of the York Branch of Script Yorkshire, said: "This was a joint project with Liam Evans-Ford at York Theatre Royal and we were thrilled that Mike Kenny, who has written the new adaptation of the York Mystery Plays, was one of the judges. It's a great chance for local writers to develop their work and see it performed."

**from: Morv Hamilton**  
**to:**  
**date: 28 January 2012 15:41**  
**subject: Writing submission**

Hi there,

I wondered if I'd be able to submit my play to Benchmarks? Essentially, the play is about the relationship between pupils, teachers and the wider community, inspired both by my own community and school, and by particular schools in Yorkshire, and written about the issues around pupil-teacher relationships. I'm a PhD student at the University of York, and although I haven't had anything published or performed professionally yet, my past plays have won York Mysteries Modern Mysteries 2012 competition, Script Yorkshire's year-long script competition at York Theatre Royal in 2011, and I was shortlisted for the NSDF's 2011 International Student Playwriting Competition. My telephone number is [REDACTED] - please just give me a call if you need anything else from me.

Thanks in advance  
Morven Hamilton

**from: Park Bench Poets**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**date: 31 January 2012 20:20**  
**subject: Re: Writing submission**

Hi Morven,

How great to hear from you and thank you for your submission of LATE ROOMS. I am also involved in the York mysteries 2012 and have previously been involved in the NSDF, so I'm sure we have trodden similar creative ground.

I have enjoyed reading the first 13 pages of your script.

For further consideration this week, would you be able to send us a SYNOPSIS of the rest of the play/story and a previous sample of work. As you mentioned, your play is "about the relationship between pupils, teachers and the wider community"...

I wondered what you wanted to say about these relationships, what you wanted to say to today's audience or questions you raise or will raise with LATE ROOMS?

Many Thanks. I look forward to hearing from you very soon.

S  
**from: Morv Hamilton**  
**to: Park Bench Poets**

**date: 1 February 2012 19:29**  
**subject: Re: Writing submission**

Hi there!

That's great to hear! Sorry this has taken until now to get back to you - I've been at work all day so only just got back to be able to access my previous work.

Synopsis:

Three teenagers, Becky, Gordo and Stef, discover that their French teacher is having an affair with their classmate (Stef's ex-girlfriend). When they return to school, they're left to deal with the dilemma of whether to tell anyone - whether it's better to protect their classmate and their own privacy by keeping it a secret, or whether having her best interests at heart means they really should tell someone. Late Rooms follows Becky, Stef and Gordo as they attempt to deal with keeping a secret that might ruin lives. A series of vignettes run along side the main action. A man attempts to reconcile with his wife after she tells a newspaper that his affair with a pupil 'didn't matter to her', but he's misinterpreted what she meant by that. Two caretakers watch a wife visit her husband's grave - 'childhood sweethearts', or at least, one of them was. A newsroom debate the merits of running a young woman's affair with a sixteen year old girl as their front page - is it less objectionable that she broke the law as long as she's attractive? Two girls joke about spreading rumours that a teacher they don't like groped them in the corridor - but it turns out one of them isn't making it up. A politician is caught in a media uproar after being incorrectly quoted that teacher/pupil relationships don't have to be a bad thing. A high school headmaster attempts to cover up the fifth affair at his school in four years. Late Rooms is an evaluation of how we treat teacher/pupil relations in society, and whether questions ought to be raised about what is and isn't acceptable behaviour.

Basically, the questions I want to raise stem from my research into actual and recent events, and are primarily about the behaviour of society in condemning what it believes to be unacceptable. Whether it is or isn't acceptable, the condemnation and the spotlight put on the people in question may itself be just as destructive for young people, for teachers' abilities to do their job, and for the education system as a whole.

The play I've attached is my first piece of work, Notes, written for my MA dissertation in 2010. As such, it's a little more conversational than my style is now, but this is the script that was shortlisted for the NSDF competition I mentioned. I've also attached the piece written for Modern Mysteries, although it's shorter.

Morven

**from: Park Bench Poets**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**date: 12 February 2012 15:07**

**subject: Re: Writing submission**

Dear Morv,

Thank you for your submission to the BENCHMARKS 2012 project and interest in Park Bench. We received a huge amount of interest and submissions from Nov 2011 - Jan 2012, making it very difficult to select just a few to develop as part of our community response series at Hull Truck. I really enjoyed reading your proposal and hope you will stay in touch!

Your play has not been shortlisted for professional production as part of BENCHMARKS work in progress series this time round at Hull Truck. However, we feel that your ideas and creative writing responded well to our brief and we have recognized your unique voice as a writer. Your work has a lot of potential, so would like to offer you support and other opportunities (See links below) that you might be interested in or perhaps other projects that would be of greater value to your work. We would however like you to stay in touch as we develop new work. We will update you of more projects and add you to our mailing list. But most of all...I encourage you to continue writing!

We will not be able to give specific feedback to everyone immediately at this time, but are happy to share our thoughts during the selection process that might answer any questions regarding feedback. In shortlisting work, we've considered;

- The engagement with our brief of "new community" "dis-jointed community" and "change in the community",
- The writer's links to Yorkshire as a regional based project
- Balance of themes throughout the series, how it fits between other work
- production practicalities
- The potential for development within Park Bench's vision, values, and style of new work
- How beneficial this particular project's process might be for the writer
- How it engages with a wider audience today
- Innovation

| Please keep your eyes open for up coming events that you might want to be involved in or come and support. We'd love to meet you and it had been a pleasure to read you work.

Other opportunities you may be interested in.....

BENCHMARKS + BENCHMARKS Response night - please come and see and support our new work at Hull Truck Studio. There will also be a response opportunity for 4 short pieces on the final night (Winter) that have responded to the BENCHMARKS series over the course of the year! Your BENCHMARKS submission or a new piece of work might be ideal for this, so watch out for this in the year ahead.

SCRATCH at FRUIT - a regular script in hand development showcase of new work in Hull curated by Ensemble 52. This is very much for writers to hear work out loud.

HELLONight - A creative/artist networking Cabaret event we are hosting for writers, performers and theatre makers, musicians in the region to say HELLO and celebrate and meet local talent. Get to know other artists in the area for future collaborations and opportunities.

Hull Truck New Writing initiative - check out for up coming opportunities, groups and courses. As well as on going open submission policies for unsolicited scripts!! We read every single one and provide full feedback reports to everyone.

We'll be curating various cabaret nights in Hull on princess avenue on a Saunday, from Easter on-wards called The Hat Trade, where new snippets of work is welcome and shall be keeping you in mind nearer the time. So stay in touch and thank you in advance for your support.

We hope to see you in the audience of BENCHMARKS in the future and that you will keep in touch. Thank you again for your work.

I've always thought a true writer writes because they need to write. Not to say what we can all shout about, but to say what we are unable to. So hope you will continue and look forward to meeting you in the near future.

Best wishes

Sarah

Sarah Davies  
Artistic Director & Producer

**from: Morv Hamilton**  
**to:**  
**date: 8 April 2012 21:46**  
**subject: Submission for ScriptSlam**

Dear Ms Bickerton,

I'm writing to you to submit my short piece Late Rooms for the May 31st ScriptSlam. If there's any chance you can look at it, I'd really appreciate it! If there's any more information you need from me, you can contact me at mh560@york.ac.uk or by mobile on [REDACTED]

Thanks in advance,  
Morven Hamilton

Late Rooms by Morven Hamilton.pdf  
92K View Download

**from: Sarah Bickerton**  
**reply-to:**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**date: 10 April 2012 10:44**  
**subject: RE: Submission for ScriptSlam**

Dear Morven,

Thank you very much for submitting a piece of work for ScriptSlam. Your work will be read and we will be back in touch after the deadline to let you know whether or not it has been chosen for ScriptSlam on May 31st.

We look forward to reading your work.  
Best wishes,  
Sarah

**from: Margaret Rogerson**  
**to:**  
**date: 13 April 2012 01:10**  
**subject: Modern Mysteries**

Dear Morven

I am attaching the article I have written for the 2013 issue of *Years Work in English Studies* that is dedicated to medieval drama. The editors have accepted it, although I will make some changes to update it before it goes out. It will be some time in the process yet.

I refer to your script (starting on page 15). If you have the time I would be grateful if you could have a look at it and let me know if you disagree with what I have said or have any other comments. Initially I had hoped to send it to you before I turned it in but the deadline came and there I was at the last moment just finishing off.

Thank you for allowing me to read your script, I hope that rehearsals are going well and look forward to hearing about the actual production. Unfortunately I will not be in York to see the *Modern Mysteries* in August as I have booked for the first week of the Museum Gardens event and will have left before the Galtres Festival.

Best wishes  
Margaret

Margaret Rogerson | Associate Professor  
Department of English | Faculty of Arts  
THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Extract:

“...The play thus urges tolerance from both inside the Christian faith and outside it. In addition it responds to the dilemma of coping with the knowledge that others will die that is suggested in the laments of Noah’s Wife in the original York play where she has to leave her friends and relatives behind. The anguish and confusion of the survivor evident in Hamilton’s script is a recurring interest in the plays considered in this essay and in the medieval Mysteries.”

From The York Press:

[http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/leisure/theatre/9892757.The\\_Modern\\_Mysteries\\_Museum\\_Gardens\\_York\\_August\\_27/](http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/leisure/theatre/9892757.The_Modern_Mysteries_Museum_Gardens_York_August_27/)

**The Modern Mysteries, Museum Gardens, York, August 27**

“Next month, Morven Hamilton is to take up her new post as writer in residence at Bootham School . Already she has won the Script Yorkshire Script Factor competition last year, and she shows still more promise in the apocalyptic Neither The Day Nor The Hour. Noah And The Flood, her play’s inspiration, is more often humorous, but contrasting beliefs of a father and daughter are dealt with more gravely here. Hamilton’s dialogue has both intelligence and intensity, and Amos D Jacob’s direction emphasises both.

...

Short and fearless, challenging but not unduly experimental, these quick bursts of life are fascinating plays for today rooted in the past.”



**from: Paul Birch**  
**to: Matthew Midgley ,**  
**Morv Hamilton**  
**date: 31 May 2012 15:15**  
**subject: Armed Forces project**

Dear Both,

I'm sorry it's taken so long to give you more info on the armed forces project. There are a few project partners and it's taken a long time to get certain information from some people.

So, attached is the timetable of the project. Please have a look at the dates and let me know if you would still like to be involved. We will then put you through a CRB check.

In terms of your involvement - it's up to you. If you would like to do some writing then we can work that out. If you would prefer simply to observe or be involved in some of the directing we can do that as well. Whatever would be useful to you.

If you would like you are also welcome to work with the digital storyteller to bring your own stories to the project. Personally, I would say this is well worth doing even if you would prefer your stories not to be in the final production.

I hope your work is going well and look forward to hearing from you,

Paul.

**from: Paul Birch**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**Matthew Midgley**  
**date: 3 September 2012 14:55**  
**subject: Armed Forces project**

Dear Both,

If you are still both up for the project - let's meet up in the w/c 10th September and I can get you both up to speed. There is a party for the young people from the barracks to meet with our youth theatre on the 10th itself (6.30 - 8.00) here at Friargate. You are both very welcome (in fact it might be useful if you were able to make this. We could meet immediately before (say 5.30). Let me know if you can or can't make this. I am also free to meet on Tuesday, Monday or Friday if that suits you better.

You may also want to attend one of Barrie Stephenson's story gathering workshops which he will be running in different community venues until the end of October. The material he gathers will form the basis of our plays. This will

primarily be shared through Dropbox Folders (there will be large sound files) so if you haven't got dropbox on your computer I would sign up. It is free and I am finding it more and more useful on collaborative projects. I know that matt has contacted Barrie - (Morven let me know if you are up for this and I will pass on Barrie's number).

Also, Morven I haven't forgotten about our conversation regarding Script yorkshire - i have a meeting shortly and I may be able to push some of those original ideas on a little further..

Look forward to catching up with you guys

P.

**from: Amos D Jacob**  
**to: rocky**  
**Andy Curry**  
**Morv Hamilton**  
**Mark France**  
**Alex Wright**  
**Joy Waters**

Dear All,

I have talked to most of you about the Fringe Season idea. As everyone seems positive that it is a good idea I would like to arrange a meeting between all of us to get the ball rolling and start deciding on specifics.

I would like to suggest Sunday 30th September at 4PM. How does this suit everyone.

I am really keen to get started. I think it will only take a couple of month to get everything sorted if everyone is as excited about it as I am.

Please reply quickly.

All the best,

Amos Jacob

**from: Hannah Davies**  
**to: Morven Hamilton**  
**date: 31 July 2012 22:25**  
**subject: Githa marketing stuff**

Hi Morv,

Good to see you today hon. And thanks so much for helping me out. Much appreciated. Massively.

I have attached a press release and eflyer for you to send out. The eflyer's not been approved so as long as it doesn't get back to C it should be alright, I don't imagine they will be hanging out in the feminist writers groups of Edinburgh so no worries there.

Here are our press coverage so far:

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/theatreblog/2012/jul/30/what-to-see-edinburgh-fringe-festival>

<http://www.threeweeks.co.uk/article/ed2012-3-to-see-one-woman-shows/>

Also here are the links I found while on the hunt for promising places/people/groups to get in touch with. These are mostly feminist women's groups (my favourite one is Damsels in Success!) There may be some more mileage in contacting a few writers groups too. I guess just bcc me in, so I can keep a track of what's gone where.

Also, just in case, here are links to 3 images we are using, if for any reason you need them.

[https://dl.dropbox.com/u/20232494/GITHA\\_FLANCOL\\_1.JPG](https://dl.dropbox.com/u/20232494/GITHA_FLANCOL_1.JPG)

[https://dl.dropbox.com/u/20232494/GITHA\\_FLANCOL\\_2.JPG](https://dl.dropbox.com/u/20232494/GITHA_FLANCOL_2.JPG)

[https://dl.dropbox.com/u/20232494/GITHA\\_FLANCOL\\_3.JPG](https://dl.dropbox.com/u/20232494/GITHA_FLANCOL_3.JPG)

Thanks again love and just let me know re your tickets and I'll get them booked.

H x

**from: Old Vic New Voices**  
**reply-to:**  
**to:**  
**date: 24 August 2012 17:54**  
**subject: 24 Hour Play: Writers Successful Application submission**

Your application has been submitted to the judging process of The 24 Hour Plays: Old Vic New Voices 2012 – Directors – Writers – Producers brief.

If you are selected to attend the audition stage you will be contacted via email by Thursday 06 September 5pm.

Due to the high number of applicants Old Vic New Voices will ONLY contact those applicants who have been selected to attend the audition stage. If you have not been contacted by Thursday 06 September 5pm please refrain from contacting us directly.

However we will post the names of those selected on the Shortlist page of The 24 Hour Plays: Old Vic New Voices 2012 – Directors – Writers – Producers brief on Friday 07 September 12pm.

Old Vic New Voices

**from: Lucy Glover**  
**to:**  
**date: 18 October 2012 10:44**  
**subject: HighTide Bootcamp Birmingham | IdeasTap**

Hello

Congratulations on being shortlisted for the HighTide Writers Bootcamp in Birmingham. Please can you confirm that you are able to attend the 2 day Bootcamp on Monday 22nd & Tuesday 23rd October at midlands arts centre, Birmingham. Please let me know if you are able to attend or not by 5pm today so that I can offer the place to another applicant. If I don't hear from you, you may risk losing your place on the bootcamp.

Once you have confirmed I can pass on more detailed information about what to expect from the bootcamp next week.

Best Wishes  
Lucy

**from: Lucy Glover**  
**to:**  
**date: 19 October 2012 11:06**  
**subject: HighTide Bootcamp Birmingham**

Hello

Thank you for confirming your attendance. Congratulations on winning the HighTide Bootcamp brief. We look forward to welcoming you next week to Midlands Arts Centre, Cannon Hill Park, Birmingham, B12 9QH. Both days will begin at 10am and finish at 5pm. Please make sure you arrive a little early for a prompt start at 10am. When you enter through the main doors there is a reception desk on the left and they can take your name and direct you to where you need to be.

You will need to bring the following:

- A full play, printed
- One scene with enough copies for the number of characters (so 2 characters, 2 copies and 3 characters 3 copies etc)
- Something to write on and with (can be computers / ipads etc)
- Bring a memory (written down)
- Bring a dream...the asleep kind rather than an aspiration (written down)
- A photograph not taken by you (preferably printed or copied rather than online)

Kind regards,

Lucy

**SHEFFIELD ROAD SHOW EVENT  
NOW SOLD OUT!**

Join 2008 winner Andrew Sheridan at Sheffield Theatres on Saturday 10

November, 10.00pm – 12.30pm and 1.30pm – 4.00pm

Andrew trained as an actor at Rose Bruford and has performed extensively in award-winning theatre, television and film. Andrew's debut play, WINTERLONG, was one of the winners of the 2008 Bruntwood Prize for Playwriting. In 2011, the play opened at the Royal Exchange Studio, Manchester, directed by Sarah Frankcom. The critically acclaimed production transferred to the Soho Theatre, London, and has subsequently been produced in Sweden, Holland and Germany. Andrew has also completed a residency at the National Theatre Studio and is currently working on his next play, HOPE, LIGHT & NOWHERE.

Sheffield Theatres, 55 Norfolk Street, Sheffield S1 1DA | SOLD OUT

<http://www.writeaplay.co.uk/2012/09/sheffield-roadshow-event/>

**Meeting Re "Blood & Chocolate"**

**Simon Benson**

**Sent: 09 November 2012 12:26**

**To: Jenny Orwin**

**Cc: Morven Hamilton**

Dear Morven and Jenny

Can we find a time next week for the three of us to meet and chat about this theatre project? As I said in previous email, the event is exploring the relationships between the Rowntree family, chocolate & the chocolate industry, concepts of social responsibility and duty (between employers/employees, citizens/the state) and is set in York around the time of the First World War. I am keen for us in drama to offer something that, may be, explores something of Bootham's role(s) in these interactions and exchanges – so, any material you could point us to that might set some creative juices flowing would be great!

Best times for me would be Tuesday 13th (13:30) or Friday 16th (10:15 or 11:15).

Best,  
Simon

**Re: Blood & Chocolate**

**Simon Benson**

**Sent: 11 January 2013 12:03**

**To: Morven Hamilton; Jenny Orwin**

Dear Morven & Jenny

I wonder if we could arrange a meeting for asap regarding this theatre project we are getting involved in with the Theatre Royal and Pilot Theatre Co.

Morven, I would be looking to audition students at the end of this term and start rehearsal immediately on our return to school after the Easter break in mid-April. Although we wouldn't need the final script until then (and, of course, it could still be worked on as we are in rehearsal), I suppose I would need to know by the time of the auditions what I am auditioning for – in terms of roles, sexes etc. So, the pressure is on!!

What I would like us to contribute to the project is a 20-30 minutes piece of theatre for 10-16 actors (all age groups) which explores in some way(s) some aspect of the relationship(s) between Bootham School in 1914-18, the First World War, the Rowntree family, the chocolate industry and (significantly, from my point of view) issues of conscience, duty and responsibility.

I am free at the following times, could you let me know when would be convenient with you (I am thinking of us having 20-30 mins):



Monday, 14th 11:00-12:30  
Tuesday 15th 12:00-12:30 or 13:30-14:30  
Wednesday 16th 9:05-11:00

Jenny, can we meet in your office?  
Best,  
Simon

**from: Morv Hamilton**  
**to:**  
**date: 21 November 2012 16:40**  
**subject: 100 word play - HighTide Writers' Bootcamp**

Hi Rob!

How are you doing? I'm one of the writers who came to the HighTide Writers' Bootcamp at the MAC in Birmingham last month - just wanted to send you over my 100 word play that you asked for at the workshops.

Thanks loads,  
Morven Hamilton

**from: Rob Drummer**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**date: 26 November 2012 12:32**  
**subject: Re: 100 word play - HighTide Writers' Bootcamp**

Thanks Morv, glad to see the 100 word plays coming in.

Best,

Rob

Rob Drummer  
Literary Manager | HighTide Festival Theatre

**from: Hannah Davies**  
**to: Matthew Midgley**  
**Morven Hamilton**  
**Mark France**  
**Mark Smith**  
**Tom Cantrell**  
**date: 31 October 2012 15:21**  
**subject: PhD playwriting workshops**

Dear all,

Thanks for all your positive responses to my last email! As the weeks are flying by so quickly and people are very busy we have made the decision to run only one session this term and to run two for the spring and summer terms 2013. The first workshop details are:

Scenic Stage Theatre  
Week 10  
Thursday 13th December  
14:30 - 18:30

Tom Cornford will be in touch with a brief for the writers shortly. The overall idea being that this will help to troubleshoot an existing problem within a draft or be a way to develop something unformed and in it's very early stages, so either way no pressure to bring something slick! Can everybody make sure they wear clothes they are able to move in comfortably. Let's all go for a pint after perhaps?

Could you also please let me know your availability for week 0 of next term, Thursday 3rd January.

Looking forward to seeing you all soon.

Best  
Hannah

**from: Paul Birch**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**Matthew Midgley**  
**Kelvin**  
**Barrie Stephenson**  
**date: 10 December 2012 14:18**  
**subject: Armed Forces Plays**

Dear All,

I am very pleased to enclose the first drafts of all three plays. As discussed there wasn't quite enough of the right kind of material to make 90 minutes of strong theatre also be verbatim but all three have been inspired by the stories initially uncovered through Barrie's work and our own drama workshops. We have (probably in order of performance)

1) 'Oceans' by Matt Midgley. This looks at the painful issue of a Female Solider as she prepares to leave her family behind before deployment.

2) 'WarGround' by Paul Birch. This play looks at the concerns children have in integrating in secondary school and their own concerns for their serving families. This play is different from the original proposal after conversations between the young people at Strensall with Director kelvin Goodspeed suggested this might be a more apt topic.

3) 'For Fierce Confusion, peace' by Morven Hamilton. The difficult issue of PTSD is addressed through the lens of a family adjusting to the return of a troubled soldier.

We will need to make sure the scripts have a level of flexibility in them. We won't know until next term as to the precise numbers for each cast. There may have to be gender swaps or cross gender casting.

We would also welcome specific comments from Jonty and Kelvin for their thoughts before a second draft. Please could we have these by Monday 17th Dec.

Most crucially we need to make sure that Lynette from the Army Welfare Service is happy with the scripts. Her job of looking after the young people and her relationship with current service personnel as well as her expertise may ask us to tone down, raise up certain elements within the scripts. She should also give her thoughts by the 17th.

Writers may also want to do their own re-writes and, perhaps, reference characters in the other two scripts. Please could we have Final drafts by Friday 11th January 1.00pm. Please send final drafts in word - I will resolve formatting issues.

Huge thanks to you all and particularly Matt and Morven for such great short plays.

Paul.

**from: Jon Boustead**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**date: 11 January 2013 15:37**  
**subject: Armed forces play**

Hi Morven,

So we've got your cast! Have you any further thoughts on the issue of the window? Would be great to get the redraft in by monday aft. so we can dish out the scripts on monday eve. Also wanted to invite you and matt to the read-through? Or if you wanted to pop in on any rehearsals to offer any input or just see how the pieces are coming together - you're more than welcome to attend any sessions you like! :)

Anyway let me know, and if there's any problems just drop me a line,

Jonty

--

Jonathan Boustead – Youth and Education  
Riding Lights

**from: Descent Literary**  
**to:**  
**date: 26 January 2013 17:08**  
**subject: Script submission - Descent**

Hello Morven

Earlier this year you submitted a play to us at Descent for consideration for our new writing night. I'm sorry it has taken me so long to get back to you, we had an overwhelming number of submissions, but I'm pleased to say Late Rooms has made the shortlist.

As it has been a few months since you sent the play I just wanted to get in touch at this stage to check firstly that you would still be interested in us producing it, and secondly that the play hasn't already been performed elsewhere in the interim.

We'll be making our final selection for our April event by mid-February, but let me know if you have any other questions.

Thanks again for sending your play to us. I look forward to hearing back from you.

All the best,  
Keziah

Keziah Warner  
Literary Manager  
Descent

**from: Jessica Fisher**  
**reply-to: Jessica Fisher**  
**to: Jessica Fisher**  
**date: 30 January 2013 16:05**  
**subject: Blood and Chocolate - Documentary Theatre Course**

Dear Writers,

Wishing you a belated happy new year!

I'm sorry it's taken me longer than planned to send you this email - the usual January combination of deadlines, paperwork and tax returns have conspired against me...

We're really looking forward to meeting you next week to get started on the Blood and Chocolate documentary theatre project. The project is a collaboration between Pilot Theatre / Slung Low Theatre Company / York Theatre Royal, The University of York and Script Yorkshire, York Branch.

We will meet each Tuesday in the Keregan Room, which is just through the Stage Door of York Theatre Royal, on the right hand side at the end of the corridor. The sessions will run from 7.30pm - 9.30pm. The dates are 5th, 12th, 19th and 26th February and 5th, 12th, 19th and 26th March.

I understand that some people have other commitments on some of the dates - please don't worry about this. There is a waiting list for the course however, so we would like people to be able to attend at least 6 out of the 8 sessions in order to get the most out of the project. On a similar note, I'd be grateful if you could let me know if you no longer want your place so that I can give it to someone on the waiting list.

I will be at every session, joined on different weeks by Tom Cantrell (University of York), Liam Evans-Ford and Katie Posner (Pilot Theatre).

Don't worry about preparing anything in advance. Week one will be an introductory session for us to tell you more about the project, about verbatim / documentary theatre and to get the ball rolling. We expect that people will come with varying levels of experience and prior knowledge - you're all very welcome!

Really looking forward to meeting you all next Tuesday.

Best wishes,

Jessica Fisher

**from: Jessica Fisher**  
**reply-to: Jessica Fisher**  
**to: Jessica Fisher**

**date: 23 March 2013 22:12**  
**subject: Verbatim - Tuesday 26th March**

Hello writers,

I'm really looking forward to hearing some of the work you have created over the last few weeks. We have booked the upstairs room of the Black Swan on Peaseholme Green for this coming Tuesday so we can have a drink or two and relax over an informal reading of your work. Please aim to be there for 7pm so we can get going at 7.30pm.

The evening will be very laid back, and pieces will be sight read by you, or other members of the group. The capacity of the room is 50, so if you want to bring someone along, please do.

It would be really helpful if a member of each group could give me an idea before Tuesday of the length of the piece you'd like to share (just so I check make sure we can fit every group in!). If you only want to share a short extract, this is absolutely fine - this process is all about you, so no pressure!

Fianlly, please read on for an email that Tom has worded on behalf of both of us about the future of the project...

Thanks, and looking forward to seeing you on Tuesday,

Jessica

Dear all,

We hope that you are enjoying your work on the documentary projects, and we look forward to hearing your work.

As we mentioned at the beginning of the sessions, the Script Yorkshire meetings are part of a project associated with the Blood and Chocolate production. Tom Cantrell is currently working with 60 students who are researching York's chocolate industry. They will be performing three 30 minute plays from 16-18 May. We will email you about the performances, and it would be great if you can attend.

In addition, Tom will be working with Katie Posner and Liam Evans-Ford to edit a play for the York Cocoa House (from 24-29 June), and hopefully Goddards, the National Trust owned home of the Terry family (from 1 - 8 July). The piece will be edited from interview material that the students have collected, as well as your interviews if you are happy to share them. If so, we ask that you email your transcribed interviews to Tom at [tom.cantrell@york.ac.uk](mailto:tom.cantrell@york.ac.uk) after the readings next week.

For this project, we are looking for three writers to help edit the material and create a narrative as well as potentially conducting further interviews. This



group, working with Tom and Katie would create a first draft, and Tom will then work with students at the university to develop this before rehearsals start in June.

We are planning to meet for two full days (10 and 11 April) to work on the material, and then on two further dates that we will arrange with the writers. If you would be interested in being involved in this process, please email Jessica and Tom. We will choose writers based on the interview material they have collected and how this links to our plans for the production. All the writers will be fully credited for the interview material we use. We're looking forward to continuing our work in this area with some of you.

For all writers, we will continue to explore platforms for your work, and will hopefully be in touch about opportunities to do so as these arise.

All the best,

Tom and Jessica

**from: ideastap.com**

**to:**

**date: 5 March 2013 13:18**

**subject: Thank you for applying to Editor's Brief: Rising**

Hello Morven Hamilton

Thank you for submitting your pitch to the Editor's Brief: Rising brief.

If you have been successful we will be back in contact shortly, but please check the Editor's Brief: Rising brief page regularly for updates.

**from: ideastap.com**  
**to:**  
**date: 9 April 2013 14:42**  
**subject: Thank you for applying to Write a play for HighTide Festival 2013**

Hello Morven Hamilton

Thank you for submitting your application to the Write a play for HighTide Festival 2013 brief.

If you have been successful we will be back in contact shortly, but please check the Write a play for HighTide Festival 2013 brief page regularly for updates.

To help us understand how we could be more useful to you, we'd hugely appreciate it if you could take a moment to fill out the four questions in the survey below - it should take less than a minute.

Fill out the quick survey [here](#).

This message has been sent by ideastap.com, to make sure these messages reach your inbox add our address ([noreply@ideastap.com](mailto:noreply@ideastap.com)) to your address book and you'll be sure to see all your latest updates from IdeasTap.

**RE: Blood and Chocolate**  
**Simon Benson**  
**Sent: 15 April 2013 08:52**  
**To: Morven Hamilton**

Hi Morven

Was delighted to read this – it looks really good and I can't wait to get to work on it.

Let's find a time to chat soon – we go into rehearsals on Wednesday.

Best,  
Simon

**From: Simon.Benson**  
**To:**  
**Subject: Old Scholars**  
**Date: Wed, 1 May 2013 21:18:08**

Dear Graham

You asked if I would do something next Friday (10th) for Old Scholars – do you still want me?!

My plan is that Morven Hamilton (our writer in residence) and I will introduce this new play about Bootham during the First World War (I will discuss background to the whole project, Morven will talk about researching & writing this play). A group of students (who will be performing the play later this term) will then read the play to the scholars (lasts about 25 mins) and we will finish with questions/comments/etc.

Does that sound ok?

Best,  
Simon

**from: Sarah Nutland**  
**to:**  
**date: 17 May 2013 16:53**  
**subject Adrienne Benham Award 2013 - Submission Received**

Dear Morven

Thank you for sending Theatre Centre your entry for the 2013 Adrienne Benham Award. I will be in touch again in October after the judging panel has decided on the shortlisted applicants.

Shortlisted applicants will be invited to an interview for the second stage of the process, which we'll be in contact about if successful.

Best wishes,

Sarah Nutland

Office & Tour Coordinator

**from: George Turvey**  
**to:**  
**date: 30 May 2013 22:39**  
**subject Papatango Prize 2013 Re: Submission for the Papatango New Writing Prize 2013**

Thank you for entering the Papatango New Writing Prize 2013. Unfortunately due to the high volume of entries we cannot give individual feedback.

Please make sure your entry is anonymous but has up to two contact numbers, which will still be viable in July and August; if your submission does not follow these criteria, please re-submit a new version in line with these requirements, otherwise your entry will not be considered.

Details of the longlist will be placed on our website [www.papatango.co.uk](http://www.papatango.co.uk), our Facebook page and onTwitter.

--

George Turvey

Co-Artistic Director, Papatango Theatre Company and New Writing Prize  
[www.papatango.co.uk](http://www.papatango.co.uk)

**from: Morv Hamilton**  
**to: literaryteam@finboroughtheatre**  
**date: 4 June 2013 20:59**  
**subject: Scots Inquiry**

Hi there!

I'm not sure who to address this to in your literary department, but I'm a PhD student at the University of York, and I'm writing my dissertation on the ideas involved in writing a play in Scots dialect (phonetic or otherwise), and what the complications are in performing said plays outside Scotland.

I'm writing to you because of all the English theatres I've looked at so far, Finborough's is the only one to specifically say in their policy that they're happy to receive plays in Scots and Scots Gaelic. I think that's absolutely brilliant, and so I'm mostly writing to you to investigate what seems like a bit of an anomaly as far as I can tell. If there's anyone who's got a minute to write back, this would be really useful to my research - I was just wondering if you could tell me a little more about why you felt like it was necessary to include that in your literary policy, and also (if you know) how regularly you receive plays written in either Scots or Scots Gaelic? Has the Finborough Theatre ever produced a play in Scots Gaelic?

Thanks in advance,  
Morven Hamilton

**from: Neil McPherson**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**cc: LiteraryTeam**  
**date: 4 June 2013 22:57**  
**subject: Re: Scots Inquiry**

Hi Morven

Basically, just because nobody else does in England - we thought it important that someone does. We've done a number of plays in Scots including a couple of readings of new work and Robert McLellan's Jamie the Saxt. We haven't done a full play in Gaidhlig as yet (money is the problem) but Somersaults which we did in January is about 10-15% in Gaelic. So far, we have had about half a dozen plays in Scots and 1 in Gaelic. N x

--

Neil McPherson, Artistic Director  
Finborough Theatre

**from: Morv Hamilton**  
**to: Neil McPherson**  
**date: 5 June 2013 16:17**

**subject: Re: Scots Inquiry**

Hi Neil!

Thanks for such a quick response - that's fantastic!! I wonder, if you've got another minute (and it doesn't need to be so fast; I'm sure you're really busy!) if I could just pick up on what you said just now - that money is the problem where Gaelic plays are concerned? Is it an issue with them being financially viable since they're not in English? Did that affect your audience for Somersaults at all?

Thanks again,  
Morven x

**from: Neil McPherson**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**date: 5 June 2013 17:15**  
**subject: Re: Scots Inquiry**

We are unfunded so the problem is getting enough money together to hire Gaelic speaking actors or decent enough tuition. For Somersaults, we could only pay a little for tuition so it was dependent on the goodwill of the teacher really x



**from: Yale University Press**  
**to: Morven Hamilton**  
**date: 13 August 2013 21:01**  
**subject: [Yale University Press] Your submission has been received**

Dear  
Morven Hamilton:

Thank you for submitting to the Yale Drama Series competition, generously funded by the David Charles Horn Foundation.

We receive over 1,000 entries from 30 countries, so your patience while the judges read the entries and make their decision is appreciated. The winner will be announced in April 2014.

Best of luck!

--The Yale Drama Series for Emerging Playwrights

**from: ideastap.com**

**to:**

**date: 13 August 2013 21:57**

**subject: Thank you for applying to The International Student  
Playscript Competition**

Hello Morven Hamilton

Thank you for submitting your application to the The International Student  
Playscript Competition brief.

If you have been successful we will be back in contact once the brief has closed  
and judging is complete, but please check the The International Student  
Playscript Competition brief page regularly for updates.

**from: Emma Campbell**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**date: 5 September 2013 13:40**  
**subject: RE: Stage to Page Scene Submission**

Hello Morven,

Thank you for your submission to September's Stage to Page. We will be in touch after the deadline to let you know if your scene has been selected.

Best wishes  
Emma

Emma Campbell  
Administration & Communications Coordinator  
Playwrights' Studio, Scotland

[www.playwrightsstudio.co.uk](http://www.playwrightsstudio.co.uk)

**Re: Bootham School WWI stories BBC radio**  
**Sam Johnson**  
**Sent: 27 September 2013 10:23**  
**To: Morven Hamilton; Jane Peake**

Hello Morven and Jane,

Monday afternoon between 1:15pm and 4pm is ideal for me. Morven, as I'm unfamiliar with your archives and restricted by my deadline, could I request that the material that was used to develop the play is on hand to view, or that you are able to guide me to items you feel are most interesting/illustrative? You may also like to know that feedback from my employers and BBC Radio York suggests that they are keen to pursue the threads that relate to public suspicion of Rowntree and the maths teacher, as well as material that explores childhood experiences of war and the tensions regarding duty (something which I felt the play skillfully explored).

Jane, I'm now also able to let you know a bit more about the broadcast scheduling, which I was unable to answer during our meeting. These 5 features will be first broadcast in late January, featuring as a full 30 minute programme as well as individual features. There is scope for these to feature on BBC Radio 4 but I'm not authorised to discuss this in detail as it fits with broader BBC programming.

I'm looking forward to returning to the school and getting to see some of the archival material. Once again, thank you for your co-operation and for inviting me to the play yesterday, I really enjoyed it.

Regards  
Sam Johnson  
Research Assistant, Historyworks.

**from: Tom Cornford**  
**to: Mark France**  
**Dan Ford**  
**Hannah Davies**  
**Mark Smith**  
**Matthew Midgley**  
**Morven Hamilton**  
**date: 17 September 2013 11:11**

Dear All,

A date for your diaries: I've arranged for Simon Stephens to do a workshop with for post-grad students when he's visiting us on 16 October. It'll run from 11.30am-1pm and will focus on two of his plays which will premiere next year: Blindsided and Carmen Disruption. I have copies of the scripts for those who sign up - obviously they're under embargo and mustn't be reproduced or distributed more widely.

Please let me know if you can make it.

Best wishes,

Tom

**from: Brenda Williams**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**date: 30 October 2013 10:05**  
**subject: Kirsty**

Hi Morven

It was really lovely to see you and catch up. I was telling my Kirsty, and saying you'd submitted something to Radio 4. She wants to know to whom? Was it to the Writers' Room? Also, she asks if you have anything published that she can read!

Brenda x

**from: Brenda Williams**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**date: 5 November 2013 17:38**  
**subject: Re: Kirsty**

Hi Morven,

Kirsty wants you to send plays to her home email - [kirsty78williams@gmail.com](mailto:kirsty78williams@gmail.com) - but warns you that it may take her some time to get back to you with 2 wee ones around!

Let me know when you are coming up here then we can arrange a date to visit.

See you next month

Brenda xx

**Jane Peake**

**12 November 2013 14:52**

**To: Simon Benson; Morven Hamilton**

**Cc: Jonathan Taylor; Jenny Orwin; Luke Gilliver**

Hi Simon and Morven

I'm in touch with Friends House London re WW1 stuff. They'd very much like an audio recording of the Rowntree diary play, which they'd then send out to all UK Meeting Houses as part of a WW1 resource pack. They've asked me to find out if we can produce a high quality sound recording for them to copy. Can you manage to do this? And if so, could it be done before the end of term?

Please could you let me know what you think might be possible so that I can get back to 'HQ'!

Thanks

Jane

**from: Kirsty Williams**  
**to: Morv Hamilton**  
**date: 25 November 2013 20:30**  
**subject: Re: From Netherlee Primary**

Hello Morven

Lovely to hear from you. Sorry I didn't reply sooner - I decided I'd just read Foxes Children straight away and then email you and, of course, I got waylaid...

It's a difficult thing you've been asked to pull off - ensemble drama I think is so incredibly hard, plus the fact you're working with fact so need to stay within those parameters. But I think you've done a really great job: the scenes are all beautifully structured and full of subtle, quiet dramas. I hope you're very pleased with it.

In a sense I wonder if it would have been nice to see more clear shifts in how Ellen and Arthur's moral struggles with their situation change and grow as the war years progress. Seeing a progression within their internal battles may have given you a stronger dramatic arc to punctuate the mini-dramas with and to bind them together. It may have also helped you develop a more varied subtext to play-out within the mini-dramas. But (and it's a big 'but') I suspect that would turn fact into fiction - which was clearly what you needed to resist doing. So my gripe holds little water, really...

Re writing for radio and how I got my job - very happy to expand on both of them. If you fancy a wee coffee at some point when you're in Glasgow, then shout and I'll pass the children to my mum for an hour. I'm on sabbatical until end of May, otherwise I'd suggest you come into the BBC and see the place. In the meantime, do you have any stage work plucked purely from the imagination I could read? I'd love to if you do.

Very good wishes to you and beautiful York.

Kirsty



**PhD Full-Length Plays: *Filthy Little Explosions***  
**Play I of III**

**Filthy Little Explosions**

A play by Morven Hamilton

*Dramatis personae:*

*The students:*

*Olly (Oliver McKay) – 17 years old*

*Stef (Stefan Pasavich) – 17 years old*

*Becky (Rebecca McKay) – 14 years old*

*Ems (Emma Bradley) – 14 years old*

*The teachers:*

*McKenzie (John McKenzie) – mid 40s*

*Hutch (David Hutchinson) – mid-to-late 20s*

*Julie (Julie MacDonald) – mid-to-late 20s*

*The school main foyer.*

HUTCH        Come on then, come on then. Prelim marks. What have we got?  
How did we do?

EMS            We did it.

HUTCH        Beauty and brains.

*Ems runs to hug him. The hug gathers several other students in the process. Stef loiters by the stairs.*

HUTCH        Stef? Can I tempt you to join us? How did you do in your prelims?

STEF          No chance. I'm not a fucking poof.  
Anyway. Only got a C. Not really worth it.

*He leaves.*

HUTCH        Congratulations, everyone.

*McKenzie enters as the girls start to exit.*

MCKENZIE    Now, David. I've warned you about this.

HUTCH        Just got caught up in the moment.

MCKENZIE    This isn't a laughing matter.

HUTCH        They got good prelim results. That's all.

MCKENZIE    There are standards. You know Ofsted would be down on us in a heartbeat if they thought there was even the slightest hint that you were touching the pupils.

HUTCH        I'm not. Next time I'll be sure to push them off. Well done on your exams; keep your hands where I can see them. Nothing says celebration like maintaining a ten foot radius.

MCKENZIE    Look. I don't like to wade into disciplinary action. I don't want it to come to that. You know I don't. I want us to function as a team, first and foremost. And that team means that you take what I'm saying

and act on it. Not as a threat. Don't see this as a threat, of course. Just a friendly warning. This time.

*The headmaster's office.*

STEF I'm not dropping out of English.

MCKENZIE I'm afraid that decision is out of your hands.

STEF I like English.

MCKENZIE It's your ability we're concerned about, more than your liking for the subject. I can offer you a place in the year below.

STEF I already sat my Standard Grades once. Why would I do it again?

MCKENZIE Practice makes perfect.

STEF I want to stay in this class.

MCKENZIE As I've said, that isn't an option that's open to you.

STEF But it's only a mock exam. And I got a C.

MCKENZIE You *scraped* a C.

STEF I still got one.

MCKENZIE The school isn't convinced about your abilities to do it in the exam. We feel that you'd be better suited in other areas.

STEF You *are* the school. You're the headmaster.

MCKENZIE The *acting* headmaster. It's out of my hands.

STEF Sir. I want to take the exam. It's two months away. I'll learn between now and then.

MCKENZIE I know that. I know you will. But not in that class.

STEF            Look, I'll just take the exam. If I fail it, I fail it. I promise not to have a mental breakdown if that's what you're worried about. I'll take it on the chin or whatever.

MCKENZIE     It isn't simply a question of your wanting to do it. It's a question of standards. You will not be put forward for the Higher English paper. We have a very high standard to uphold, and this would be – well, it would be a blemish on both our reputation and yours. We won't have it on our records.

STEF            That's what this is about. You're not giving me the chance because you're worried it might look bad on the school.

MCKENZIE     Let me be clear, we think it's in your best interests *as well as* the school's –

STEF            You don't think it'll look fucking awful on the school that you're pressurising people not to take exams they might actually pass?

MCKENZIE     Stefan, I'm sorry. I'm not brooking any discussion about this.

STEF            So all this - all this shit about the excellent standards at this school, all this about putting a 'high premium on results' – it's really just about putting the fucking knockers on anyone who looks like they won't do so well. 'Take the pens off the retarded kids; they might make us look bad.'

MCKENZIE     Mr Pasavich, kindly refrain from using that phrase in my office.

STEF            It isn't your office. You're the *acting* head. If you won't do anything to help me, I'll say whatever the fuck I want. You think you're all so perfect. You think you're all so fucking crystal clear, you think you're diamonds, when all you are is a polished shit.

MCKENZIE     You know, I don't want to have to dangle a suspension in front of you.

STEF            But you just did. This is a fucking joke. Why don't you just go ahead and expel me if you're going to take a shit all over my education?

MCKENZIE     I'd prefer not to do that.

STEF            Why?

MCKENZIE Because -

STEF Because an expulsion would look bad on the school's records.

*Pause.*

MCKENZIE Get a blazer please, Stefan. You're a sixth year now. We need you to look smart.

STEF Look smart, but not be smart.

MCKENZIE I want us to have a reciprocal relationship, do you understand? You give me what I want and I'll give you what you want.

STEF I know what reciprocal means. I want to sit the exam. Are you going to give me that?

MCKENZIE I'm sorry.

*Stef leaves.*

*Marking in the staff-room.*

HUTCH *Shall I compare thee to a summer's day,  
Mr Hutchinson is more lovely and more temperate.*

JULIE They can't actually have written that.

HUTCH I was paraphrasing. It's actually a perfectly lovely story from one of the first years about a young girl who finds inspiration in her intelligent and dare I say dashing teacher, who secretly turns out to also be a prince who fights dragons in his spare time with his almighty sword.

JULIE I think you'd get a lot less of these stories as coursework if they realised that after the two of you got married and you tried to carry her over the threshold, the size of your ego would stop you getting through the door.

HUTCH       Who needs doors. Over-rated. We'd be roaming free in the outdoors, riding on dragons, if this is anything to go by.

JULIE        Too much Harry Potter?

HUTCH        I don't like to object. If they're still coming to English and reading *something* instead of poking about with bits of liver and iodine, I'm not going to discourage them. Do you discourage it if they turn up to your class and swear blind that Wagner is the world's greatest composer? As long as they're listening to something. Reading something. Keeping their right brains ticking over.

JULIE        David, this is serious.

HUTCH        I'm more worried that she used the word 'shiny' six or seven times. They need more adjectives in their diet.

              I'm perfectly serious. Gloriously grave. Absolutely unsmiling. Adverbs *and* adjectives. She's going to have to do better than 'His sword, it was shiny and his horse, it was big' if she's going to woo me with love stories.

JULIE        What would you do if they took it further?

HUTCH        They don't. Generally speaking. It's just a phase. Plenty of kids go through it. I'm sure you've had your own fair share. You ignore it and they get over it.

JULIE        Right. Right. Of course. Obviously.

*The bell rings.*

HUTCH        You alright?

JULIE        I'm fine.

HUTCH        I'll admit I seem to attract an above average amount of romantic verbiage, but it's only because I'm so devastatingly handsome. That's hardly my fault now, is it?

*Hutch leaves. Julie is left alone.*

*Vending machines. STEF puts some money in. Nothing happens. He kicks it.*

OLLY            Those vendies are broken.

STEF            I bet that's a really fucking useful talent. Did you turn up after the Titanic sank and tell them there was a great big twatting hole in the boat? If you were going to tell me you could have told me before it took my money. I can fucking see it doesn't work. Take your head boy badge and fuck off.

OLLY            It'll still give you it back.

*OLLY presses the button a few times with a practised method. He hands the money back to STEF.*

STEF            *(reluctantly)* Thanks.

OLLY            All about knowing which buttons to press at this school. They haven't really been the same since the sixth year last year filled it with shaving foam on the last day.

STEF            Before I started.

OLLY            They're getting rid of them anyway. Healthy eating kick.

STEF            Fuck that.

OLLY            Doesn't seem like you're getting on that well here.

STEF            Come to tell me I'm not smart enough to be here?

OLLY            No, I just meant, doesn't seem like anyone likes you.

STEF            Oh, cheers.

OLLY            No offense.

STEF            Hutch likes me. Can't fucking get enough of me.

OLLY            He doesn't mean anything by it. Just wants you part of things.

STEF            Maybe I don't want to be part of it. I don't need him being my fake best mate.

OLLY            Have you got a best mate?

STEF            Here? No.

OLLY            Have you got one somewhere else?

STEF            Loads. Fucking - loads.

OLLY            You could come by mine after school if you want.

STEF            And paint each other's nails?

OLLY            I can get you a blazer.

STEF            I'm not a fucking charity case.

OLLY            My mum owns the shop.

STEF            I don't need a bum buddy.

OLLY            Fine. Never mind.

STEF            Have you got an X-Box?

OLLY            A Wii.

STEF            What are you, a fucking girl?

OLLY            The Mariokart's quite good.

STEF            Alright, fine. Fine. Where do you live?

OLLY            32 Seres Crescent.

STEF            Tonight?

OLLY            Make it tomorrow. I've got jazz band tonight.



*Music practice room. OLLY plays something gentle and intimate on the cornet – the quiet end segment of Trumpeter’s Lullaby - accompanied by JULIE on the piano.*

*A pause. They kiss.*

JULIE I was beginning to think you weren’t going to make it.

OLLY I had second thoughts.

JULIE Oh. Right.

OLLY I’m kidding, I’m kidding. I just had to finish an experiment in Biology. Miss Crosson told us something interesting. She said you can knock a mouse out with a pineapple.

JULIE I can imagine. Pineapples are pretty big.

OLLY No, you spanner, because there’s anaesthetic in it. You’re right though. Preparing a pineapple would take a long time. I don’t know why you’d bother with anaesthetic when you can just bash it over the head.

JULIE Don’t say that when you’re going for your Medicine interviews.

OLLY No. Probably not. Good shout.

JULIE Your parents are still making you apply.

OLLY She says I’m too smart to waste it on music.

JULIE You should tell her that being smart isn’t the only thing you need to be a doctor. Having some interest in the patients helps too.

OLLY You’re saying I wouldn’t be a good doctor?

JULIE I’m saying you’d be a better cornet player. If you auditioned for the RSAMD this year, I know they’d take you. I know they would. I could talk to your parents.

OLLY I think it’s probably best if we keep you and my parents as far from each other as possible, don’t you?

JULIE I’m your guidance teacher.

OLLY           Guidance teachers don't drop in on their students' houses.

JULIE           I wouldn't have to. Maybe I could just drop by the shop. Give her a phone.  
No. I know. I can't. I know.  
Why does she let you waste time on jazz band when you should be studying?

OLLY           I wouldn't count on that forever.  
Don't worry about it. I'm setting up another alibi.

*OLLY's bedroom. Playing the Wii. The conversation is stilted by the game.*

STEF           Do you always play as Princess Peach?

OLLY           Sometimes.

STEF           You're not a poof, are you?

OLLY           She's got good boosters.

STEF           "Christ, yeah, look at that girl. Check out the boosters on that."  
What about Hutch?

OLLY           What about him?

STEF           Lot of rumours.

OLLY           Mostly with girls, isn't it? It's only because he flirts with everyone.  
He doesn't mean anything by it.

STEF           You're a bit defensive about it.

OLLY           Hutch is a good teacher.

STEF           And you have a crush.

OLLY           No. I just think he's a good teacher, and I don't listen to rumours.

STEF           Knows a lot of poetry.

OLLY He's an English teacher.

STEF My experience, there's only two reasons you know poetry. To get into a girl's pants, or because you're a massive gay.

OLLY Know a lot about poetry do you?

*STEF pauses the game.*

OLLY What?

STEF *His broad clear brow in sunlight glow'd;  
On burnish'd hooves his war-horse trode;  
From underneath his helmet flow'd  
His coal-black curls as on he rode,  
As he rode down to Camelot.  
From the bank and from the river  
He flashed into the crystal mirror,  
"Tirra lirra," by the river  
Sang Sir Lancelot.*

I know poetry. I'm not a fucking retard.

OLLY I never said you were. Bit of a freak though.

*Awkward pause. They unpause the game and continue.*

STEF Everyone at this school thinks I'm a retard. Ever since I got here, they've been up in my face that I'm not as smart as everyone else.

OLLY You do support Celtic.

STEF Fuck off. I'm serious.

OLLY Maybe it's because you swear all the time.

STEF Or maybe it's because I moved from Govanhill and I might chib them.

OLLY Yeah. Most people's parents weren't happy.

STEF I'm not a bad student.

OLLY           It's a good school.

STEF           It's a fucking state school. It's meant to provide for everyone. I wasn't coming here because of the brilliant fucking reputation. I'm not some desperate homeless hoping they'll throw me an education. I'm only here because my mum left my dad and got a council flat up the road and now I'm in your fucking catchment area. Because you lot have council flats too, and just because yours are surrounded by detached bungalows doesn't make them any better. I don't give a shit about the standards. That's not why I'm here. They should take the stick out of their arse and stop treating everyone like they're not good enough if they're not medical students. Some of us aren't.

OLLY           Sometimes I wish I wasn't.

STEF           The world fucking weeps for you.

*BECKY and EMS come in. They pause the game.*

OLLY           Oh God.

BECKY          Hiii.

EMS            Hi Olly.

OLLY           Hi Ems. Becky, get out.

BECKY          You should be nicer to me. I taught you to play Mariokart.

OLLY           No you didn't. I knew before.

BECKY          You only play as Princess Peach because I told you.

OLLY           Get out.

BECKY          Aren't you going to introduce us?

OLLY           Fine. Becky, this is Stef. Stef, this is my spoon of a sister.

STEF           Nice name.

BECKY        This is Ems. She's my friend. How many friends do you have, Olly?

OLLY         Leave us alone.

STEF         S'okay.

OLLY         No it isn't.

STEF         Haven't got any brothers and sisters.

OLLY         Do you want this one?

BECKY        She can hear you.

OLLY         Good. Then maybe she'll hear me when I say get the fuck out.

BECKY        Alright. Fine. Fine. I can tell when I'm not wanted.

OLLY         Can you? That would be a first.

*BECKY and EMS leave.*

STEF         You two get on well then.

OLLY         Yeah.

*They finish the race.*

OLLY         Can we switch characters?

STEF         No chance. I'm always Yoshi. He shits on everyone else. Fuck off.

*Immediately out of the room, in Becky's bedroom.*

BECKY        Fit.

EMS         Your *brother*?

BECKY        No, you spanner. His friend.

EMS         Stef.

BECKY        Fit. Sir Fittington of Fit.

EMS            He's not all that.

BECKY        Yes he is. All that and a can of Pringles.

EMS            You'll be like that about sex too next. Once you pop you can't stop.

BECKY        Shut up. What's got your back up anyway. You usually love older men.

EMS            Do not.

BECKY        You like Adrian Chiles.

EMS            I do not.

BECKY        Yes you do. Why else would anyone watch The One Show?

EMS            My mum likes it.

BECKY        You wouldn't come out to the cinema with me last Friday until it finished and then we missed the bus.

EMS            They were talking about something interesting.

BECKY        His nipples?

EMS            Shut up. So what if I like older men?

BECKY        I just think if you set your sights a little bit lower, you might actually get somewhere.

EMS            You should start an advice column. 'If you want to be successful in love, you just need to lower your standards.'

BECKY        I'm not saying they should be mingers; I'm just saying they shouldn't be pensioners.

EMS            Mr Hutchinson isn't a pensioner.

BECKY        You like *Hutch*?

EMS           Doesn't everyone? I'd give *him* a can of Pringles.

BECKY        Oh my god. He's a *teacher*.

EMS           A *fit* teacher.

BECKY        He's like, forty five.

EMS           Don't be so stupid. He's only just qualified. He's like, twenty three at the most.

BECKY        'He's only just qualified' – what have you been doing, stalking him?

EMS           No, just paying attention. That's why we had that supervisor in the other week; the one with the dowdy skirt who smelled of lilies and kept dropping her pen.

BECKY        Twenty three is still way older than you. Like, eight years.

EMS           Yeah well, love bridges oceans, or whatever.

BECKY        You can't build bridges over oceans, you spoon. He isn't going to love you.

EMS           He might.

BECKY        He probably doesn't even really know your name that well.

EMS           I bet he does. I wrote him a story last week.

BECKY        *You what?*

EMS           I wanted to tell him how I felt, so I wrote a story about us when we had creative writing last week. It was about how he and I fell in love and wrote each other letters, but we were both from different times in history. I was in like, now and he was in like the 1940s and he was a soldier, and we were sending them through time travel or something.

BECKY        So you wrote a story about how he's old.

EMS No, it's about how we battled all the years to be together.

BECKY And that went down well? What mark did he give it?

EMS I didn't get it back. Or the one before it.

BECKY Probably because he was too embarrassed to give you a proper grade. Maybe he'll give you one through time travel when you're like fifty. Except he'll probably be dead then because he's FAR TOO OLD FOR YOU.

EMS Maybe he kept it in his house somewhere.

BECKY What, as a token of love? We don't all keep weird little shoeboxes of stuff, you know.

EMS Whatever. He still has it. That means maybe he likes me.

BECKY It means maybe you're delusional. I'm going to get some Pringles. You made me want some now.

EMS That was totally your own fault.

BECKY Whatever. Do you want some or not?

EMS Yeah. Okay.

*Dinner table.*

BECKY Chicken nuggets again?

OLLY Mum's running late at the shop.

BECKY When's Dad back from Aberdeen?

OLLY I spoke to him earlier. They're taking some clients out for dinner.

BECKY I wish I was there.

OLLY There's nothing wrong with chicken nuggets.



BECKY        You should learn to cook.

OLLY         *You* should learn to cook if you're so fussy.

BECKY        You wouldn't cook like this for your girlfriend.

OLLY         Just as well I don't have one then, isn't it?

BECKY        Are you going to introduce me to Stef?

OLLY         Well I must have done – you know his name.

BECKY        I knew his name anyway. I've seen him at school.

OLLY         Then you don't need me to introduce you.

BECKY        But you *know* him.

OLLY         So?

                 No. No way.

BECKY        I like him.

OLLY         You don't even know him.

BECKY        I want to get to know him.

OLLY         He's too old for you.

BECKY        He's your age.

OLLY         That's still too old.

BECKY        You're not Mum.

OLLY         Mum leaves me in charge.

BECKY        And you make me chicken nuggets. You're not exactly a great surrogate.

OLLY         The answer's still no.

BECKY All you'd need to do is bring him over or something.

OLLY And then what, shove him into your bedroom and leave?

BECKY I don't know. Invite me to a party.

OLLY There aren't any parties.

BECKY That you go to. Because you don't have any friends.

OLLY I've got Stef.

BECKY Fine. If you introduce me, I won't tell Mum.

OLLY Won't tell Mum what?

BECKY That you don't have any friends because you tell her you're going to jazz band and then you go to your girlfriend's.

OLLY I haven't got a girlfriend.

BECKY Mum doesn't know that they cancelled jazz band over the prelims. I do.

OLLY I haven't got a girlfriend.

BECKY Then is Stef your boyfriend? Are you just working up the courage to tell Mum you're gay?

OLLY Have you gone mental? Stef isn't my boyfriend.

BECKY Good. Then introduce me.

OLLY Mum doesn't want you seeing anyone yet. Too bad, little squirt.

BECKY It's not like she'd know. She's never here.

OLLY It's because she doesn't like you.

BECKY Sometimes I think she doesn't like either of us.

OLLY I was kidding.

BECKY I wasn't.

Anyway. She doesn't want you seeing anyone either. She says you're meant to be concentrating on your exams. Maybe if you spent more time studying to be a doctor and less time with your mystery girlfriend you'd know chicken nuggets and chips are bad for you. Maybe I'll just call Mum now and ask her what she thinks.

*A scrabble between Becky and Olly for the phone.*

Or you could just introduce us.

OLLY I'll think about it, alright? I'll think about it.

BECKY That's all I ask.

OLLY I'm never going into paediatrics.

BECKY I know what that means, you know.

*A music practice room.*

JULIE Lunch time? You couldn't wait until the end of the day?

OLLY I'm getting a little pressure at home. Might have to skive off today.

*Beat.*

JULIE Your parents found out?

OLLY No. My sister suspects something though.

JULIE That's not funny.

OLLY No. I'm just warding her off. Once she gets her teeth into something, she doesn't like to let go until she gets it. Bit of a family trait, I suppose. When we know what we want, that's it. Like me and you.

You know if they ever took us to court about this and tried to say that *you* seduced *me* I'm going to laugh right in their face.

JULIE Court?

OLLY You must have thought about it.

JULIE Even if I have. Why are we talking about it?

OLLY Becky being on the scent got me thinking.

JULIE Can we just leave it?

*Pause.*

OLLY Have you got a nice wardrobe?

JULIE What?

OLLY Have you got a nice wardrobe? You know, skirts and blouses and whatever. Because they're going to talk about it. 'The disgraced teacher, wearing a white blouse and a black waistcoat and trousers bowed her head' – The Daily Mail, about Helen Goddard. Christ. It's not even relevant. Why does it matter if you're a sex object while you're in court?

JULIE Stop it. Stop saying it out loud.

OLLY It doesn't make it any less real.

JULIE It isn't real. It hasn't happened.

OLLY But it could.

I think it helps to admit it.

JULIE How? How does it help? It doesn't change anything. It doesn't stave it off. Doesn't make it less likely we'll get caught.

OLLY It doesn't make it more likely either. We're just putting it out in the open that both of us know what we're doing is wrong.

JULIE It *isn't* wrong.

OLLY           No. No. I didn't mean it that way. It's right. It's really – right. But it's not...

JULIE           I don't want to talk about this.

OLLY           I couldn't tell from your tone.

JULIE           Stop it. Why are you bringing this in here? Why are you making it hard?

OLLY           Sorry. It was on my mind. I wanted to share it with you. I thought that's what we do as – as a couple.

JULIE           Not about this. We don't share about this.

OLLY           That's the first time I've called us a couple, you know.

                  It's hard when we can't spend any time together.

                  Maybe if we could have a weekend. Just spend the weekend, you and me. Go somewhere.

JULIE           You can't even stay this afternoon.

OLLY           Once the exams are done. I promise.

JULIE           You promise. You know, when I was a teenager, I found everything really hard. I used to cry myself to sleep some nights, because I thought no-one would ever love me. There was this boy I really liked, but then it turned out that he was only interested in my best friend Sarah. She had long blonde hair and she was way more mature than I could ever hope to be at that age. I don't mean just that she had boobs. And he went for her, and I always felt a little bit dowdy and plain by comparison, like when I got up in the morning and smiled at myself in the mirror, it always looked a bit more like a death grimace to me. I thought I'd never find anyone who'd look at my face and think to themselves, yes. Yes. It's you. You're the one I've been looking for. Why would anyone think that about this face? And my mum would always say to me, Julia, one day someone's going to love you, and they'll love you without question, and that'll be it. Your problems will be over. I promise. And I went to university, and I thought, well, maybe I'll meet someone in the corridor on the first day, and our eyes will meet

across the hall, and we'll move in together, and sort our lives out and get a mortgage and a cat. Maybe I'll be walking down the street one day and I'll walk right into the man of my dreams. But it never happened for me. And then I got this job, and you found me.

OLLY I did.

JULIE Don't make promises you can't keep.

OLLY I'll keep this one. I –

JULIE You promise.

*School main foyer.*

HUTCH Stef. Stef. Wait a minute.

STEF What do you want?

HUTCH Alright, civil tongue, would you please?

STEF What is that you require as pertaining to my giving a fuck?

HUTCH That's a gerund you used there, did you know?

STEF I'll direct you back to the original statement – why would I give a fuck what it was?

HUTCH You're on your own for lunch?

STEF Wasn't meant to be. Olly's dinghied me.

HUTCH Happens to the best of us.

STEF I don't think anyone at this school would say I was the best at anything.

HUTCH Maybe I can help.

STEF Doubt it.

HUTCH        Seems like you could do with some help in English.

STEF         Does it? Doesn't seem that way to me. Seems to me like the school's given me the bum's rush and put me in the retard class. Don't need any help to pass it. I already sat it once.

HUTCH        You haven't been showing up.

STEF         Figured I don't actually need to pass it either. If I'm not going to do Higher English, what's the point?

HUTCH        You know, if you wanted, I could tutor you out of class.

STEF         Are you asking me out on a date?

HUTCH        In your dreams, maybe. I'm a highly sought after man. No, what I meant was that if you wanted, only if you want mind, I could give you private lessons after school. We could just say an hour or so after school. Maybe every Tuesday?

STEF         And after that I could sit the exam with everyone else?

HUTCH        Well – we'd have to see.

STEF         That's a no.

HUTCH        I just thought if you wanted to learn – you obviously don't enjoy being in the –

STEF         The retard class.

HUTCH        The Standard Grade class –

STEF         So you thought that I'd want to stay behind for an hour after school? Like a voluntary detention?

HUTCH        Plenty of people stay behind for extracurricular things after school. If you're worried what your mum would think, I could call and reassure her that you're not being punished in any way.

STEF         Sounds like a punishment to me. All these other kids – all the shit they stay for, jazz band and orchestra and hockey teams and

fucking chess club – it's all stuff they can put on their UCAS forms. Shit they can say to grovel their way into Medicine or Sociology or whatever. I couldn't do that.

HUTCH        You'd get to learn more. Broaden your mind. I thought you might enjoy it. I've got together some books and things I thought you'd like. We could work on it together.

STEF         And what does that translate to on paper? Fuck all. I don't need learning for learning's sake. I need an exam result so I can get a job. Doesn't even have to be that good, but they won't let me take it. All I need is something on a bit of paper. I don't need to be able to recite poetry. Just the shitty bit of paper. Can you give me that?

*Pause. Stef goes to walk away.*

HUTCH        We can try, alright? We'll give it a good shot.

*STEF's bedroom. Phat Planet by Leftfield.*

OLLY         This is just noise.

STEF         You've got to feel the rhythm.

OLLY         I can feel the noise.

STEF         Girls grab your boys.

OLLY         What?

STEF         You're kidding. It's fucking Slade, you div. Fucking classic. I thought you were a music student. *(He sings. Badly, but recognizably.) Come on, feel the noise, girls grab your boys. Classic.*

OLLY         Maybe if you turned this off I'd be able to think.

STEF         You don't know how to fuck a girl, do you?

OLLY         What's this got to do with it?

STEF         You've really got to feel it. The bass beat. Girls love a bit of bass.



Really deep in your bones, you know. Really sets their nerves on end or something. Makes them want it hard. Just full on, grind to the beat, til they just want to rip your fucking clothes off and do it right there on the bar.

OLLY            That's all you like music for?

STEF            No. I like other stuff too. But I like this best.

OLLY            There's other music that's just as hot, you know.

STEF            You're not going to play your trumpet, are you?

OLLY            It's a cornet. It's different.

STEF            How?

OLLY            It's smaller.

STEF            Sounds the same.

OLLY            It can be hot.

STEF            Right.

OLLY            It can.

STEF            Prove it.

*Olly gets out his iPod.*

STEF            Nah. Nah. Don't fob me off with your fucking iPod. If you're going to play me something really play it. You've got it here. Get it out.

OLLY            You say that to all the boys.

STEF            Fuck off.

*Olly gets out his cornet instead. He starts to play some classic jazz – Summertime by Billy Holiday. Stef throws himself back onto the bed. In the same key, Olly segues into playing the melody of Akon's Smack That.*

STEF            *I feel you creeping, I can see it from my shadow*

*Why not jump up in my Lamborghini Gallardo*

*Olly eventually stops playing.*

STEF            Yeah. That was alright.

OLLY            You know all the words?

STEF            Yeah. I guess. It's kind of – it's got poetry. Not the way you lot think of, but it's there.

OLLY            My lot?

STEF            Wouldn't get me any marks in an exam. Still words though. Just as many as Alfred Lord Tennyson or whatever shit. I don't get the difference. Still art, isn't it?

OLLY            I suppose.

STEF            So what's the difference between what's music and what's 'just noise'?

OLLY            It's hard to explain.

STEF            Because I've heard all that 20<sup>th</sup> Century stuff Miss MacDonald teaches us. Meant to sound like sirens at Hiroshima or whatever. It's just a joke someone would pay to listen to that. I'm only listening because she's fit.

OLLY            Right. Yeah.

STEF            You don't think?

OLLY            No, I do, I do. I'd tap that.

STEF            Smack that.

OLLY            Yeah.

*Pause.*

STEF            Mum says it's not worth listening to this stuff either.

OLLY She doesn't like you talking about women like that.

STEF Nah. Don't think she cares about that part so much. Thinks it encourages violence or something.

OLLY Towards women.

STEF Nah, like, in gangs or whatever.

OLLY Are you in a gang now?

STEF Like your school has gangs.

OLLY It's your school too.

STEF Yeah.

OLLY We could be a gang.

STEF No you couldn't. They'd do you in straight off.

OLLY Yeah.  
You ever been in a gang?

STEF Not like in the movies or something.

OLLY But you have?

STEF Why do you care?

OLLY Alright. Just curious.

STEF Not like we run around in cars and shoot people out the windows or anything. More like we just tagged ourselves on the walls and stuff.

OLLY And your mum didn't like it?

STEF Didn't like the people much.  
The GABBA Crew.

OLLY Gabba?

STEF           It's the initials. Stands for 'Get All Black Bastards Away'.

OLLY           But that's –

STEF           I didn't say I was in it, alright. Mum just worried maybe I might. I wouldn't though. But there wasn't a lot else to do. Everyone else in our flats was going that way. There wasn't much else to do. They're not really racist. They don't actually care about pakis, really. Well, more than anyone else I guess, but they're not actually doing anything. It's just called that because they needed a name that sounded good. There's fuck all else to do but defend your ground down there, even if it is a shit hole.

OLLY           So you moved here.

STEF           Yeah.

OLLY           Do you ever wonder what you'll do after school?

STEF           Dunno.

OLLY           Maybe you could take a gap year.

STEF           Fuck off. And do what with it? Go to Gambia and teach all the starving kids how to say twat? I said to my dad once when I was younger that I was going to take a gap year. Didn't really know what it was. He told me if I wanted to spend a year wanking off trying to 'find my identity' I could just fuck off down the library and Google myself.

OLLY           I'd quite like to take one. A gap year, I mean.

STEF           Not surprised. Your parents are loaded.

OLLY           Yeah. They want me to be a doctor. I'm not really that keen. I'm more of a musician type.

STEF           Gay, you mean.

OLLY           Thought maybe I could take a gap year and do that for a bit. Just busk or something. Maybe try and get into a proper band.

STEF           Why don't you just tell them to fuck off and do what you want?

OLLY           They're paying for it.

STEF           Right.

OLLY           And Mum's not that keen on me being in band practice as it is.

Listen. I was thinking. Do you think if I told my mum I was coming round to help you with English or something, that we were studying together, do you think you could cover for me? You know, if she calls, tell her I'm on my way and give me a ring, or something.

STEF           You must be really fucking desperate to be at this jazz band.

OLLY           Yeah. Something like that.

*STEF on the doorstep of OLLY's house.*

STEF           Hi. I'm – is Olly around? I brought him some music.

BECKY          What kind?

STEF           The Specials. Thought he could learn to play some proper brass.

You know – the – *(he sings the wah-wah trumpet solo from the start of Ghost Town by the Specials.)*

BECKY          I know what it is. I thought he was with you.

STEF           Right. Shit. Yeah. Of course. He is. I just wanted to drop this off - on the way to... meet him. So he doesn't have to carry it.

BECKY          You're a terrible liar. Do you want to come in?

STEF           If he's not here? Nah. I'll head off.

BECKY          Maybe he meant us to meet. Maybe he said he'd be here and then set us up.

STEF           What, like a blind date?

BECKY         Yeah.

STEF           On your doorstep.  
What age even are you?

BECKY         Sixteen.  
Are you coming in or not?

STEF           Nah. I should head.

BECKY         Alright. Know where Olly is then? Because he should have been home an hour ago. He said he was with you. I was just going to phone Mum. If you know what I'm saying.

STEF           I'm not a grassbag.

BECKY         I'm not saying you are. I'm just saying you could come in for some tea or something.

STEF           That's it? You need to work on your powers of temptation.

BECKY         I figured it was kind of a carrot-stick thing. Tea, or I phone my mum.

STEF           Christ. He said you were sixteen. He didn't say you were a fucking she-devil.

BECKY         He keeps that part quiet. He doesn't like that I'm more devious than he is. You seem smarter than that.

STEF           Smarter than Olly.

BECKY         You seem pretty on it to me.

STEF           You're full of shit.

BECKY         No seriously. I think under all the swearing, you're actually not unintelligent. I think you're smart enough to know you should come inside.

STEF           Alright. Fine. Fine. No tea though. I'm not a fucking pensioner.

*He goes in, Becky follows behind.*

BECKY        Carrot. Stick.

*The living room.*

STEF         Is your mum in?

BECKY        No.

STEF         She's not my biggest fan.

BECKY        She hates you.

STEF         You don't fucking mix your words, do you?

BECKY        Not really. She hates you. I don't see the point in lying about it.

STEF         Alright then. What does she hate?

BECKY        Your accent. She hates your accent most. It lowers the tone. Swearing aside. She doesn't like it. Reminds her there's poor people in the world, and she doesn't like it. She doesn't like going into Poundland either. Discount shops, with all the lines of people and the sad strip lighting, all the queues of people clutching at multipacks of Dairy Milk and tins of beans at three for a pound. It makes her depressed. She doesn't like to think about it. The way you talk - you're a bit of a rude awakening. In every sense, I suppose. Everyone knows that there are council flats in Pollok and Govan and wherever, but no-one wants to know that they're here too. They don't want them smiting up their perfect green place.

STEF         It's not that fucking green. It's got a couple of trees at best down the park.

BECKY        Metaphorically.

STEF         You don't even have a Poundland.

BECKY Exactly. We don't have that kind of thing in this area. It's all leather furniture shops and estate agents and artisan delis.

STEF I don't get how anyone survives on deli food. The bread always tastes spongy. I want basil and cress in my fucking sandwich, I'll just go out and pick it out of the grass in the park. Tastes like a dog pissed in it.

BECKY They probably would have if you put grass from the park in it. I don't really get Poundland either.

STEF What, because I've got this accent, I've got to shop there? Anyway, what's not to understand? Did Olly get all the brains in the family? It's a pound. Everything is a pound. 'This thing you want? It's a pound. Give me the pound. Get the fuck out.' It's a pretty easy process to understand.

BECKY Yeah. I get that part. I do. But surely the chocolate and the crisps they're selling in there are the same quality as the stuff you get in the deli? If it's a brand, it's all the same on the inside. How are they making a profit from selling it all at like, half the price of the other places?

STEF I don't fucking know. Margins or some shit. Watch the Apprentice. Alan Sugar knows.

BECKY I'm not allowed to watch reality TV. Mum says it makes people dull.

STEF Your mum's pretty fucking judgmental, by the way.

BECKY Yeah, I know. But shut up.

STEF What?

BECKY I can say it. You can't. She's trying to do her best for me.

STEF Yeah. So's my mum. She works in a shitty pub with drunk Gers fans to make enough for us to live on, and when she gets home at night, she doesn't go around telling people they're bringing her down because of the way they talk. I can't fucking help it.



BECKY I bet. You seem like you were probably born telling the doctor to go fuck himself.

STEF Your mum wouldn't like you talking like that.

BECKY My mum wouldn't like a lot of things. What she doesn't know doesn't hurt her.  
She doesn't know I lost my VJ when I was thirteen.

STEF What?

BECKY In the cloakrooms at the back of the school. You know, the bit round the back of the Chemistry department. No-one actually uses it to put 'cloaks' in. Like anyone has cloaks. If you've got a nice jacket, you carry it round with you so everyone knows you've got it. So no-one goes in there. And we went in there, and we did it.

STEF How? You can't even fucking say virginity.

BECKY So? Still lost it.

STEF And the boyfriend?

BECKY He wasn't a virgin. See. I can say it. And he wasn't my boyfriend. He was in the sixth year.

STEF He was seventeen?

BECKY Eighteen. I had the biggest boobs in my year then. I had my growth spurt early.

STEF Jesus.

BECKY I mean, they're alright now and everything.

STEF Yeah. I mean, yeah, they're - fuck.

BECKY I'm just saying. You wouldn't be the first thing my mum didn't like.

STEF What about your dad?

BECKY What about him? Ever heard Olly mention him? He's never here. He's a consultant. Self-employed. He's always away on business.

Pops by for the weekend every so often, gives my hair a ruffle. He's been doing it since I was little, and he still does it now. Like, you know that thing everyone says about how if you're born in a leap year, you're technically only eight when you're actually about forty. I think in his head, Olly and me only exist and get older at weekends. So he ruffles my hair and pinches my cheeks, and I want to tell him to stop it – I'm not running around in the hedge anymore. I've actually worked to get my hair to where it is and I want it to stay that way, but he's only ever there for a day at a time. I don't want to waste it telling him where to get off. I think it would hurt his feelings. Besides, it would feel weird if I just dropped it in – hey, Dad, once we're done with this tickling fight, can I tell you about who I shagged last week?

STEF            You make it sound like there's multiple people.

BECKY          Not at the same time.

STEF            Fuck me. That's a relief.

BECKY          If you're offering though. Not tried more than one at once yet.

STEF            And you plan on it?

BECKY          I'll try anything once.

STEF            Does Olly know about any of this?

BECKY          No. As if he cares. He's got his own girlfriend.

STEF            He what?

BECKY          I thought you'd know.

STEF            No. He's playing his cornet or some shit, isn't he?

*Pause.*

BECKY          That's really what you think, isn't it?

STEF            Yeah.

BECKY          Because you're a shit liar. We already established.

STEF           Should I know something?

BECKY         No. Maybe not.  
So – are we having sex or not? My mum will be home soon.

*BECKY and EMS on the swings at the park.*

EMS            I wrote a letter.  
                  To Hutch.  
                  I haven't sent it yet.  
                  I wanted you to tell me what you think.

BECKY         No.

EMS            You haven't seen it yet.

BECKY         Don't have to.

EMS            At least look.

BECKY         No.

EMS            Please?

BECKY         I don't want to see it.

EMS            What if I just read it to you?  
                  Becky?  
                  Okay. So, it starts Dear –  
                  And then I don't know what to call him.

BECKY         Mr Hutchinson.

EMS            Is that too formal?

BECKY         No, it's what he's called.

EMS            You're not being helpful.

BECKY         I'm busy.

EMS            You're on a swing.

BECKY        I'm thinking.

EMS            So it goes, 'Dear Hutch,' or maybe Dear David.  
                  And then – okay, I won't read that part.  
                  It says I think he's lovely. His voice, and his eyes, and his shoes.

BECKY        Oh God. Stop.

EMS            You think it's bad?

BECKY        I don't think it's bad language; I think it's a bad idea.  
  
                  Speaking of bad ideas. I fucked Stef the other day.

EMS            We're talking about you now.

BECKY        As long as we're not talking about Hutch.

EMS            But this is the part I need your help with.

BECKY        Have you seen Olly around after school?

EMS            You're not even listening to me.

BECKY        I just meant – you used to play the clarinet in the jazz band.

EMS            Ages ago. The reed kept splitting my lip open. I haven't played  
                  since first year. Can we move on?

BECKY        Yeah. No. Never mind.

EMS            Okay. So – here's where I need your help.

BECKY        Do you know if he's got a girlfriend?

EMS            No, he was engaged I think once, but not anymore.

BECKY        I was talking about Olly.

EMS Well, I'm talking about Hutch. I've been talking about him for the last ten minutes and you're not even listening to me.

BECKY No.

EMS I need help.

BECKY Yeah. Not mine though.

EMS Who else would you suggest?

BECKY A trained psychiatrist.

EMS I'm not kidding.

BECKY Neither am I. What are you doing?

EMS Writing a letter.

BECKY Why?

EMS Telling him how I feel. It's what people do.

BECKY Not normal people.

EMS You're just saying that because Stef shagged you, and he can't even read.

BECKY Normal people don't have to write secret letters. If it's right, you just tell them face to face.

EMS So you think that's what I should do?

BECKY *No.* I said if it's right. This isn't right. It's so wrong it's practically off the scale.

EMS It could work.

BECKY It's *illegal*.

EMS It's love.

BECKY No it isn't. You don't even know what love is.

EMS           And you do? You think you're so smart?

BECKY        No. I don't know. I don't think anyone knows at our age.  
This is when you're meant to mess around with other people, and not be serious because you don't know how to be serious, and then you learn, and if you don't, well, no big deal, because in a year or so we'll all leave school anyway and never see each other again.

EMS           So I'll leave school and never see him again either. If it doesn't work out. Which it will.

BECKY        You can't leave that kind of reputation behind.

EMS           What reputation?

BECKY        You'll look crazy.

EMS           And you look like a slut. Are you leaving that behind?

BECKY        How do you think this is going to go, exactly? You're going to confess your love to him and then you're going to fuck by the light of a Bunsen burner?

EMS           Not all of us just drop our thongs at the door.

BECKY        Let's not pretend this is some intellectual bond. His university degree verses your Standard Grade in Home Ec.?

EMS           I'm going to get him to come somewhere.  
Somewhere adult. The pub near mine. I've got fake ID.  
Tell him to meet me.

BECKY        This is the worst idea I've ever heard.

EMS           No-one asked you.

BECKY        You did.

EMS           I take it back.

BECKY        Then I'm offering my opinion. Don't do this.

EMS           What's my alternative? Be like you? Go out and shag greasy twats I'm not even interested in?

BECKY        I am interested.

EMS           In sex. You're never interested in them. This is real love, and you can't understand that. You don't know what that is. Leave me alone.

BECKY        Don't do this.

*HUTCH's classroom. Locked door. JULIE and HUTCH and the letter. JULIE reads.*

HUTCH        So what do you think?

JULIE         Did you go?

HUTCH        Did I go? Of course I didn't.

JULIE         I thought maybe you might have gone to tell her no.

HUTCH        No. To say nothing of it raising her expectations when I walk in the door. I'm not meeting a student in a pub. There's a line.

JULIE         Right.

HUTCH        You don't sound convinced.

JULIE         I just thought... The line seems more blurred with you than with most people. You've genuinely never -

HUTCH        Never what?

JULIE         I don't know. Thought about it.

HUTCH        No.

JULIE         I just thought that you -

HUTCH        You thought that if the situation arose, I'd just go along with it? I asked you here for your advice, not your accusations. I wouldn't

have let you read it if I was going to go along with it. Honest to God, Julie. I'm asking for your advice. What would you have done?

*JULIE looks at the letter. A pause.*

JULIE I'm not you.

HUTCH What's that meant to mean?

JULIE I don't – I don't flirt the way you do, is all I meant.

HUTCH For God's sake. Why can no-one get this through their heads? I teach them. I teach them in a way that keeps them entertained. Keeps them motivated. I don't sleep with them. I never would. Not ever.

JULIE Good. That's - good.

HUTCH I'm glad I've got your approval.

JULIE Are you going to tell McKenzie?

HUTCH After the way you reacted? I'm sure he'll take my side. I'm sure he won't jump to the conclusion that I'm fucking her.

JULIE I didn't think you were fucking her.

HUTCH Not yet.

JULIE So you're going to keep it to yourself? You don't think that'll work out badly in the long run?

HUTCH It's not just for my sake.

JULIE You're trying to protect her.

HUTCH When I was at school, I was in a class with a girl called Paula. At the time, she was beauty personified to me. I mean, she had it all. The hair, the face, she was kind, I thought, and smart, and she didn't object to the fact that my hair was probably longer than hers was. I was totally smitten with her. I asked her out, and she turned me down. I still remember. It still stings a bit. But if she'd turned me down and I'd then had to explain to my parents, to my teachers, to



my headteacher, to my friends, exactly why I'd asked her out, while I promised never to do it again? I can't imagine anything worse. Emma wrote me a letter. I didn't reciprocate. That's an end of it, and hopefully she'll move on now.

JULIE           What if she doesn't?

HUTCH           She will. It's like I said; things at this age are passing.

*Love came along. Love came along.  
Then you. And now it's ended.  
Tomorrow I shall tidy up  
And get the radio mended.*<sup>198</sup>

She'll get over it. She'll get over it faster than she ever thought possible. In fact, when she's older she'll look back on it and wonder how she did it, and how to get that skill back. I know I do. I wish I could get over anyone as quickly as I got over Paula.

JULIE           What are you going to do with the letter?

HUTCH           Filed under B for bin, I expect.

JULIE           Right. Do you mind if I hang onto it?

HUTCH           In case she's famous, one day, you mean.

JULIE           I'm her guidance teacher. I should probably keep it around, just in case. You know, keep it on file.

HUTCH           You'll make sure it's private.

JULIE           Absolutely.

*Ems' bedroom. Ems listens to her headphones. Life on Mars – David Bowie. 'It's a god awful small affair to the girl with the mousy hair...'. Becky enters. Ems is forced to remove the headphones.*

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<sup>198</sup> From 'The Aerial' by Wendy Cope, printed in Cope (2011) *Two Cures for Love: Selected Poems 1979 – 2006* (London, Faber and Faber).

EMS            Here to say I told you so?

BECKY        Your mum sent me up.

EMS            You didn't have to come.

BECKY        Come back to school.

EMS            No.

BECKY        You're being ridiculous. Stop skiving off just because you're embarrassed he stood you up or whatever.

EMS            Go away.

BECKY        Fine. Then, also – I told you so.

EMS            Go away.

BECKY        You're being a daft bint.

EMS            You were always like that whenever I did anything wrong when we were friends.

BECKY        We're still friends now. Stop being a dick.

EMS            I know he loves me. I know he does. Even if he didn't come to the bar, it doesn't mean he doesn't. He was probably just busy or something.

BECKY        Right.

EMS            I'll do it again until he comes along. Set up another time. Maybe I'll just ask him when's good for him; tell him somewhere he can find me to send a letter back. He's going to be there eventually, and then you're going to know you were wrong.

BECKY        You sound like a crazy person. I mean, full on mental. You know that, don't you?

EMS            I'm not. I'm not crazy. I know he likes me. You might think he couldn't care less but – you're wrong. He has this way of looking at me, like I'm the only one in the room. No-one else does that.

Everyone else always makes me feel like I'm just this little girl with mousey hair and stupid teeth. Like I'm practically a boy and they're not interested. Even you make me feel stupid most of the time. I don't get how you can have sex and I can't. You're not that much fitter than me. But he looks at me like I'm the most important girl in the world. And sometimes his hand brushes mine when he gives me back my essays.

BECKY Well, he's not going to do that if you're not at school.

EMS You don't believe me.

BECKY That's not the point.

EMS Then what is? If he can't be with me, what's the point?

BECKY Getting an education. Acting like a normal person.

EMS When he reads us poetry, it's like he's talking straight to me. You must have noticed.

When he read us from Pablo Neruda, and he told us beforehand that it was way out of our league and we'd never have to study it, and then he looked straight at me when he read it. He didn't have to teach us it or anything – he did it for me. I memorised all the words and it's like he was talking straight to me.

*I do not love you as if you were salt-rose,  
or topaz, or the arrow of carnations the fire shoots off.  
I love you as certain dark things are to be loved,  
in secret, between the shadow and the soul.*

He loves me in secret. He does. He made it so obvious. In secret, between the shadow and the soul. Because that's what love means. You keep it a secret if you have to, until you can both be together. That's what he's doing now. He's keeping it a secret, even from me, until it's the right time.

I think I just have to let him know I can't be without him. I think I just have to give him a sign. Show him that I can't live without him, and he'll know and come running, and then we'll leave. I just have to give him a good shove to care about me.

BECKY        What are you going to do?

EMS            I'm not coming back to school. I'm going to get him to come to me.

BECKY        Where have you gone? Where did you put Emma?

EMS            I'm right here. If you're not going to stand by me, we're not friends anymore. Get out.

BECKY        Alright. Fine. Fine. I just wanted to try to talk some sense into you, but if you're not going to listen, it's your own stupid fault.

                  I'll miss you I guess, but whatever.

                  No. Okay. Fine. See you later.

*Becky leaves. Ems waits for a minute or so, then gets a knife out. Lights down.*

*JULIE and OLLY in a café.*

JULIE        Turn your chair that way.

OLLY        What?

JULIE        Turn it away from me. That way it looks like it was too busy and we had to share a table.

OLLY        There's an empty table over there. I'll go and sit over there, shall I?

JULIE        Just do it.

OLLY        Alright. Fine. Fine.

JULIE        Can we go?

OLLY        I only just got my coffee. I can't drink it that fast. It's still hot. You should have said if you wanted to leave. I'd have got them to put it in a paper cup.

                  Will you relax?

It's not written on our faces, you know. They can't tell we're together. Could just be a casual coffee.

*Pause.*

JULIE           Olly. How long do you think this will last?

OLLY            You want me to put a year on it?

JULIE            I want you to tell me it isn't just a passing phase.

OLLY            What's given you that idea?

JULIE            Hutch.

OLLY            Holy shit. You told him?

JULIE            No. No. We were just talking.

OLLY            And it just *came up*?

JULIE            No. It didn't. It didn't. We didn't. I haven't told him about us. But he's been getting some attention. More attention than usual. From a student.

OLLY            Who?

JULIE            It wouldn't be professional for me to say.

OLLY            You pick strange things to be professional about.

JULIE            Fine. Emma Bradley.

OLLY            Ems?

JULIE            She's besotted.

OLLY            She's my sister's mate. She's like, twelve.

JULIE            She's fourteen.

OLLY            Does he – you know – does he *reciprocate*?

JULIE           What if he did? You sound scandalised.

OLLY            She's fourteen.

JULIE           Fourteen, seventeen – it's still illegal.

OLLY            I thought you didn't want to talk about that.

JULIE           If we're going to talk about it at all, we should be clear – we're no different.

OLLY            It is. It is different.

JULIE            How?

OLLY            What if it was my sister he was cracking onto?

JULIE            What if?

OLLY            Doesn't seem right.

JULIE            He's not 'cracking onto' Ems. It's just a crush on her part. He isn't doing anything about it.

OLLY            You believe him?

JULIE            Yes. I believe him. By the same token that he would believe me.

OLLY            But you'd be lying. Are you sure he isn't?

JULIE            I know what covering your tracks looks like.

*Pause.*

                  I kept the letter, incidentally.

OLLY            You kept it?

*Julie produces the letter from her handbag and gives it to Oly.*

OLLY            Why?

JULIE            He trusts me.

OLLY           No, I mean, why would you want it? Are you her guidie as well?

JULIE           No. I said I was, though.

OLLY           Why?

JULIE           Peace of mind, I suppose. The last thing I need is John McKenzie  
bumbling into some godawful 'crack-down' on teacher-pupil  
relationships at the school. If I have it, I know no-one else is  
accidentally reading it.

OLLY           Or seeing us in a coffee shop, or listening to us talk. God, I'm sick of  
this.

JULIE           What do you propose we do then, Olly? Give ourselves up?

OLLY           Would that be so bad?

JULIE           I'm going to pretend you didn't say that.

OLLY           Good. Like we're pretending not to have a conversation.

JULIE           I'm going home.

OLLY           Great. I'll stay here. Like we don't know each other. We might as  
well make it look convincing.

JULIE           I'll see you later.

OLLY           Yeah. Yeah.

*OLLY and STEF at the pub where STEF's mum works. It's dank and dreary with  
bars on the windows.*

STEF           You learned the Specials yet?

*They do the wah-wah trumpet introduction to Ghost Town.*

OLLY           Almost. Bit old though, isn't it?

STEF            They re-recorded it last year though. Besides, what do you care?  
You listen to all kinds of old shit.

OLLY            Yeah, but mine is old like, *old*. Yours is just old like, dated. My stuff  
is like a Baroque cathedral. Yours is like sixties concrete. They're  
both old. They're just not both *good*.

STEF            Bullshit. The Specials are amazing. They're playing at the fucking  
Olympics.

OLLY            So is the British football team. Doesn't make them good.

STEF            Fuck off.

OLLY            It is quite good though. The Specials, I mean.

STEF            Yeah.

OLLY            Listen. Mate. I wanted to ask you something.

STEF            Did you just say 'mate'?

OLLY            Yeah.

STEF            When have you ever called me mate?

OLLY            Look. I wanted to tell you something. Just wanted to see how it  
goes down with you. But you have to promise not to say anything.

STEF            Alright. I promise.

OLLY            Do you – do you really promise?

STEF            What do you want me to do, fucking pinky swear it or something?

OLLY            Wouldn't go amiss.

STEF            I swear, alright? I'm not doing a fucking blood oath or anything,  
but I promise.

OLLY            What would you say if...

STEF            Yup.



OLLY           What would you say if I was dating someone.

STEF           Nice.

OLLY           And she's in her thirties.

STEF           Well, is she a MILF – or ?

OLLY           No kids.

STEF           Yeah, but I mean, is she hot like *hot* or hot like, mature? Like a cheese, or something.

OLLY           The first one.

STEF           Then you're well in. How long's this been going on?

OLLY           Well, this is the thing. Here's the thing –

                  We met at school.

STEF           What?

OLLY           We met at school.

STEF           You're fucking a teacher?

OLLY           In so many words.

STEF           How else would you put it?

OLLY           It's deeper than that.

STEF           Deeper than what? Five inches? Six?

OLLY           Come on.

STEF           Sorry, I thought this was a joke. You don't want me to take this seriously. You really don't want me to take it seriously.

OLLY           Alright, settle down.

STEF           It's hideous. It's fucking disgusting.

OLLY           Alright, there's no need to get so pent up about it.

STEF           Well, what did you think? What did you think would happen? Did you think you'd tell me and we'd just have a laugh and a joke about it? That I'd congratulate you on getting your end away? All the fucking jokes and isn't-it-funny rumours you lot roll out, because you've seen it on TV or you've read it in a book by some shit-for-brains pensioner who thinks it's all just a bit of a piss-take because his vicar used to touch him up at Eton. It's not funny. 'Oh, those dirty old men do like to cop a good feel of our balls, isn't it hilarious.' This isn't a fucking joke. This isn't some life-affirming fucking experience. This is real life. In real life it's illegal.

OLLY           It's not like that. It's not what you think.

STEF           Have you been shagging a teacher?

OLLY           In so many words.

STEF           Then it's bang on the fucking nail what I think. You're a pupil at this school. They're the teachers. It's illegal. Forget about your dick, if they even lay a hand on your shoulder. Jesus.

                  Who else knows?

OLLY           No-one. I just wanted to – you know, test the water.

STEF           Then consider it fucking tested. I thought I was your 'mate', not a fucking litmus stick.

*Stef downs his pint. Goes to leave.*

OLLY           Are you going to tell?

STEF           I promised I wouldn't. I'm not a grassbag. But I tell you what. I won't tell. I'll keep my promise – as long as you end it. Whatever sick thing you're doing – it has to end.

OLLY           And you're keeping to that?

STEF           Yup. Unlike you I've actually got some fucking morals.

*Stef leaves.*

*McKenzie's office.*

MCKENZIE 'In secret, between the shadow and the soul'?

HUTCH I don't remember touching her. If I did, it wasn't intentional.

MCKENZIE You read her a poem.

HUTCH I read the class a poem.

MCKENZIE You read them Pablo Neruda.

HUTCH It's great writing. I meant it as an inspiration. I wanted them to experience something other than *Death of a Salesman* and *Lord of the Flies*.

MCKENZIE On the way to the hospital, she told her parents you'd used it to – I believe, 'confess your love'.

HUTCH It's unfortunate.

MCKENZIE You're damn right it is.

HUTCH But I didn't intend it to be for her.

MCKENZIE It doesn't matter. She interpreted it that way. Were you looking at her when you said it?

HUTCH I don't remember.

MCKENZIE Try.

HUTCH I really can't recall.

MCKENZIE Because her parents have a good case on their hands here. If they wanted to press it, they could have us all in a lot of trouble.

HUTCH I really don't remember addressing it to her. She sits in the front row. It's possible I looked at her. But I wouldn't have looked at her exclusively.

MCKENZIE It's best if you don't appear to have memorised where she sits.

HUTCH It's a small class.

Is she alright?

MCKENZIE That's not your concern, David. You won't pursue this. Don't make any attempt to contact her.

HUTCH I never have before. I thought it was innocent until proven guilty in this country.

MCKENZIE There's a lot of evidence.

HUTCH None of it would stand up in court. The one-sided testimony of a potentially unstable teenager?

MCKENZIE Don't talk about court. We're not having a court case rocking the school. I won't have it. Not on my watch. Consider this a formal warning, David. There's going to be an investigation here, and if I find that there's been anything – anything unseemly on your part. You've been warned.

*Victoria Hospital. Ems is asleep. Olly watches. At some point, Becky enters, stands at the back of the room, unnoticed.*

OLLY You dozy mare. Becky told me you were here. I just wanted to come by.

This is stupid. I might as well be talking to the plants.

I didn't realise things were this serious, or I would have spoken to you sooner.

It's not – it's not wrong to feel the way you do. It's not wrong to love someone they say is wrong. I mean, carrying on like this isn't

going to do you any good – but, don't let them tell you it's wrong to think he might care.

I think – I think when you're better you should come back to school. It'll be good for you.

Becky does care about you, you know. She just – doesn't know how to show it. It's not her fault. She's just a bit stunted is all.

I guess I just wanted to talk because I wanted to say I know how you feel. Actually, I wanted to tell someone who'd know how it felt. I didn't think you would judge. I suppose you're not judging now. But I do know how you feel. And I hope you can hear this in your dreams somewhere, because I don't think I'll have the guts to come back and tell it to you a second time - but I know how you feel. The first couple of times, I got knocked back too. It wasn't 'appropriate'. It was 'just something I would get over'. But if you really want it, don't listen to them. Don't do this. Don't hurt yourself over it. Just – do it face to face. Come right out and ask him. If he says no, he says no. But at least you'll have tried.

And if he says yes? Well, it's a victory, isn't it? A victory you can't share with anyone. Not even your friends. But you already know that.

*Pause.*

BECKY I didn't realise you cared.

OLLY How long have you been standing there?

BECKY Long enough.

Tell me again where you were last night?

OLLY I was with Stef.

BECKY Really. I heard everything, and that's what you're saying?

OLLY You can ask him. He'll tell you.

BECKY I think he'd be a bit hurt if I asked him that. Think he'd wonder if I'd forgotten about him. If his dick was too small or something.

OLLY            You can't say dick in here.

BECKY          It's a hospital, not a church.

OLLY            Have a little respect.

BECKY          She's not dead. Anyway, it's nothing she hasn't heard before, is it Ems? She knows all about me and Stef.

OLLY            You're lying.

BECKY          I'm not. (*mimicking*) 'You can ask him.' Or if you want, I can just show you the marks.

*Becky starts to pull away the neckline of her top to reveal her collar bone. Olly stops her with his hand.*

OLLY            Stop it.

BECKY          What are you going to do, Olly? Your lies don't tally with my sex life.

OLLY            You're not impressing anyone, you know.

BECKY          I guess it's hard to impress someone who's fucking the faculty.

*OLLY slaps her across the face.*

*A moment.*

BECKY          Is that what you do to your – to your teacher?

OLLY            You're always trying to do this to me. Ever since we were little, That time you knew I was meant to be walking you to the shops and you ran off and came back with your knees all skint because you'd decided to run down the back lane like a moron. You've always been trying to embarrass me in front of Mum and Dad.

BECKY          Look around you Olly, they're not here. They're never here. The only person who's embarrassed here is you.

OLLY            Because my sister's throwing her virginity around the school.

BECKY         My virginity? That's gone. I don't remember you giving a shit the first time.

OLLY            Last night wasn't the first time?

BECKY         It wasn't even with Stef.

OLLY            You never said.

BECKY         Did you think I'd make a song and dance about it?

OLLY            You could have told me.

BECKY         You weren't interested in me. Either you involve yourself or you don't, but I'm not going to do it for you.

OLLY            Does he know you're fourteen?

BECKY         You can't fix this by taking an interest now.

OLLY            Does he know?

                  Right.

                  Give Ems my love when she wakes up.

BECKY         But who's she sharing it with?

OLLY            I'll see you later. Your dinner's in the microwave at home.

*The stairwell of Stef's house.*

STEF            What the fuck are you doing here?

OLLY            She's fourteen.

STEF            I thought you were dating a teacher.

OLLY            Becky. She's fourteen.

STEF            So?

OLLY            She told me. You two are sleeping together.

STEF            How did you even get with this teacher of yours? You can't even say you're fucking her.

OLLY            It's statutory rape. Did you know that?

STEF            It's none of your business. She's not saying it's rape, is she? She was fucking loving it.

OLLY            She's not empowered to make her own decisions.

STEF            But you can do it for her? Because you've done a fucking bang up job with your own sex life.

OLLY            You made out like you were morally superior. Like you could take the high ground about me. And really you're in the gutter too. You always were.

STEF            This is different.

OLLY            How?

STEF            I don't have a duty of care to her.

OLLY            Big words for you.

STEF            I looked it up. So I knew exactly how fucked up you were.

OLLY            What you're doing, it's still illegal.

STEF            Is that a threat?

OLLY            It's more of an agreement. I can afford to take a bit of slack at this school. I'm the Head Boy. I'm going to study medicine. I've got leeway. But you? You're right at the bottom. You're circling the drain, here. It comes out that you're *raping* another student at the school – you'll be out faster than you were out of my sister. How will your mum feel about that?



STEF            So what do you want?

OLLY            You stop seeing her, and I won't tell.

STEF            And what about your little teacher shag buddy?

OLLY            Let's just see how it goes, shall we?

*The swings.*

BECKY           So let me get this straight – you're not going to do anything?

STEF            I am doing something. I'm doing this.

BECKY           You're breaking up with me.

STEF            Hopefully.

BECKY           Because of my brother.

STEF            It was only ever a good shag.  
You'll find another one.

BECKY           What if it wasn't?

STEF            What else was it then?

BECKY           You're really not going to do anything.

                    Because honestly, I thought you were more exciting than that. You  
                    come from Govanhill. I thought you'd at least be good for a couple  
                    of fights for my honour or something. But you're just going to back  
                    out on me?

STEF            You expected me to pull a fucking chib on your brother?

BECKY           Is that so much to ask?

STEF            He's your brother.

BECKY           He's a dick.

STEF I don't do that kind of shit.

BECKY Any more.

STEF My mum likes things better this way.

BECKY Does she tuck you in at night?

*Stef steps up to Becky.*

STEF I'm not a fucking chicken, alright?

BECKY You only hit girls?

*He steps back.*

STEF I do care about you – I just -

BECKY You're right. This is over. If you're not going to do anything, fine. I didn't want you around because you're good in bed, or because you're smart. Jesus, I can't believe I even told you that. I only kept you around because I thought it would piss off my parents. The bad boy at school. Can't even get himself into a good fight. I'll sort it myself.

*The school corridor. Stef pins Olly against the wall.*

STEF You made me look a fucking coward.

OLLY Are you going to stab me?

STEF Thinking about it.

OLLY Think of your mum.

STEF Don't fucking push your luck.

OLLY I didn't do anything.

STEF You made me break up with your sister.

OLLY           And you told everyone anyway. Everyone's got their eyes on me. They're all staring like they know me. They don't know me. They don't know anything about me.

STEF           They know you're fucking a teacher. That's all they need to know.

OLLY           It's not that bad, you know. If you were in my position, you'd have done the same.

STEF           There are so many ways I fucking longed to be your 'position', you know. This isn't one of them.

OLLY           You mean, like being smart. I'll give you a tip - if you were smart, you'd get off me in the middle of the corridor.

                  You're being an idiot. Anyone can see us.

STEF           Did you want to take it somewhere private? I would, but I'm worried you'll try to shag me. I bet you've done it all over the building. This is a *school*.

                  They won't even let me sit the exam. This school won't take a punt on me because I might fuck up its reputation, but it's like you said - they'll turn a blind eye to you sucking off the teachers, as long as you keep up the admissions to medical schools. You get good grades and a good fuck, and I get fuck all.

*He lets go and backs away.*

STEF           Do the teachers know yet?

OLLY           I suppose not.

STEF           Good.

*There is a moment.*

                  Right. Well, I'd make your arrangements if I was you.

OLLY           What?

STEF           Talk to your little shag buddy. Make up whatever lies you're going to spew out to save yourselves. Because if this school's going to ruin my life, I'm sure as shit not going down alone.

OLLY           What makes you think the staff are going to believe anything you say?

STEF           They won't have to. They won't be getting it from me. Everyone already knows. Even if they don't believe it, it's in there, in their little self-important skulls. 'Olly's fucking the faculty.'

OLLY           Olly's fucking... That's what Becky said.

STEF           Yeah. I didn't tell the school. She did. Your own sister fucked you over big time. You guys must be really close. Your own fucking flesh and blood, and she went to total strangers over you. She told everyone, and then she said I couldn't help. She's wrong. I'm not a coward. I might not be in a gang whatever, but doesn't mean I can't give you the royal fucking you deserve I know exactly what I'm going to do. 'Olly's fucking the faculty, Olly's fucking the faculty.' This school's a filthy little explosion waiting to happen, and I'm going to light the fuse.

*STEF takes out a lighter, holds out his tie and sets fire to the middle of it; the school crest.*

OLLY           What are you doing?

*Stef makes no response.*

OLLY           Jesus. What are you doing? Stef, stop it. I said stop it.

*STEF stares OLLY out without moving, until eventually Olly empties his bottle of water over it. The fire fizzles out.*

STEF           Thought maybe you might just let me burn there for a second. Would have been the smarter thing to do. Guess you're not as brilliant as you make out.

OLLY           What the fuck are you doing?

STEF           This is my only tie. Looks like I'm taking a trip to your mum's shop at lunchtime.

OLLY            You wouldn't.

STEF            Got to have regulation uniform, don't I?

OLLY            You wouldn't.

STEF            Tell her about you? Wouldn't dream of it. No, I'm just going to drop it in; how I thought I'd get out of school because all anyone has to talk about is how someone in our year is having their way with the teachers. Making me feel a bit fucking awkward, you know? Then I'll buy my tie, and I'll leave, calm as a fucking bomb. By the time I'm back for fifth period, what's the bet she'll be in a fizzer about it, just like every other stuck up parent at this school? She gets on the phone to McKenzie to tell him sort out all this mess and uphold the reputation of the school; all he'll have to do is walk out the door and ask the first person he sees. Who's sleeping with the staff? They'll tell him it was you in a heartbeat. Boom. Your darling mum's just dobbed you in without even realising it. Your mum *and* your sister. Looks like I'm smarter than you thought.

OLLY            She won't take you back, you know.

STEF            Who says I'll want her? After this, your family's damaged goods.

*Guidance office.*

OLLY            I can't remember the last time we had a proper guidance meeting.

JULIE           No.

OLLY            Chatting about my future. What subjects I was going to take next year. Good times.

JULIE            Will you be serious?

OLLY            It's a little bit funny though. A teeny bit funny. I mean, the whole school's talking about which of the staff I'm shagging, and they send me to see the – did they think you were going to get it out of me?

JULIE Under normal circumstances I suppose.

OLLY Out of curiosity, what would you have said? Would you have offered me some tea first, or - ?

JULIE I really don't know.

OLLY They don't suspect you?

JULIE It's funny. When there's a hint of a scandal like this – they always assume it's a man.

OLLY So what's your guidance then?

JULIE What?

OLLY This is meant to be a guidance meeting – got any guidance?

JULIE You didn't listen to it before. I told you not to tell anyone. If you'd kept your mouth shut about it... I thought you were more mature than wanting to brag about how you'd – how you'd 'got your end away'.

OLLY I didn't think it would go down as badly as this. I just didn't want to keep it a secret anymore. I didn't think it would be like this.

JULIE You were wrong.

OLLY I can fucking see that. Did you want to tell me there's a hole in the Titanic as well?

JULIE What?

OLLY Nothing. Just something Stef said to me once.

JULIE How much do they know?

OLLY Who?

JULIE Stef and Becky. How much did you tell them?

OLLY That it was a teacher.

JULIE            Anything else?

OLLY            No.

JULIE            No – gender. No names.

OLLY            I don't think so.

JULIE            Good. Then maybe there's a way.

*The headmaster's office. McKenzie, Olly, and Julie.*

MCKENZIE    Mr McKay. Sit down.  
Relax. You're not in any trouble.  
Not yet anyway.  
I'm sure you can appreciate - this is an – this is a difficult situation.  
Has Miss MacDonald made you aware of what's being said,  
regarding – well. Regarding yourself.

OLLY            Yes.

MCKENZIE    Good. Good. I'm sure you appreciate the ramifications of these  
rumours. They're somewhat incendiary. I'm not, of course, saying  
they're true, but you know what they say about smoke and fire. So  
I have to check. Check my smoke alarms, you see, make sure  
they're not faulty.

You know what I'm saying here.

Oliver, let me be clear - is there any truth in all this?

OLLY            Yes.

MCKENZIE    Right. Then please enlighten me – who is it?

OLLY            I'd rather not say.

MCKENZIE    That option isn't open to you.

OLLY            Please.

MCKENZIE It's a crime, Mr McKay. I have to see that the appropriate action is taken. We'll find out eventually.

*Pause.*

JULIE Oliver. Tell him what you told me.

OLLY It was – it was David.

MCKENZIE David?

OLLY Mr Hutchinson. Sorry.

MCKENZIE Let me make this clear. Any teacher caught in a relationship with a student –that teacher will be barred from our school and in all likelihood stricken from the records.

Are you absolutely certain about this?

Oliver? I'm going to need your answer.

OLLY Yes. It was him.

I don't know how it happened. It was – I don't think either of us meant it to happen. It was just – it felt right. Like we're the same person. "Where I does not exist, nor you, so close that your hand on my chest is my hand, so close that your eyes close as I fall asleep."

It's Pablo Neruda. He read it to me once.

*Pause.*

MCKENZIE Right. Well. Thank-you for that, Mr McKay. You can go.

OLLY I can go?

MCKENZIE You can go. I suggest you go home for the day. We'll discuss the ramifications of this for you tomorrow.

OLLY What about David?

MCKENZIE You don't need to concern yourself.



*A pause. Olly picks up his things and leaves.*

MCKENZIE It's an interesting poem.

JULIE He's an English teacher. You'd expect it.

MCKENZIE Not to two different students. The same words he used on Emma. I could have dismissed it then – as he said, it was said in class, however inappropriately, and she misinterpreted. But now. Now it appears something more systematic. The man has his patter with the students, knows how to convince them it's alright, and then he goes for it.

JULIE You think he's done it before?

MCKENZIE It hardly matters now. This time there's definitely – intercourse involved.

JULIE But with no proof.

MCKENZIE I have the testimony of two different students, and some very angry parents on my hands. And god knows sooner or later, the press will get involved. I don't need proof; I need action.

JULIE You don't think the press will get involved if you fire him?

MCKENZIE He won't be fired. He'll be politely asked to leave.

JULIE There's a difference?

MCKENZIE Nominally. It's all about the words you use. He's good with words. He'll appreciate that.

*Hutch's classroom. His things are in boxes on the table. OLLY enters.*

HUTCH Cometh the hour, cometh the man. Except you're not here to help, are you.

OLLY I came to say I'm sorry.

HUTCH        Sorry doesn't get me my job back.

OLLY         No.  
                 You set yourself up for this.  
                 Someone had to drop you in it eventually.

HUTCH        I didn't do anything to you. You know that.

OLLY         You let Emma end up in hospital.

HUTCH        Emma put herself in hospital. Are you telling me this was some  
                 sort of bizarre crusade for her?

OLLY         No. But it helped.

HUTCH        Out of interest, how did you know what she'd said?

OLLY         Becky has a big mouth.

HUTCH        Emma told Becky.

OLLY         Of course she told Becky. Girls talk to each other about stuff like  
                 this. Did you really think it was going to stay hidden?

HUTCH        What do you think I was hiding?

OLLY         What?

HUTCH        You didn't read the letter she wrote. No-one, say, gave you that  
                 letter.

OLLY         What letter?

HUTCH        You're good, I'll give you that.

OLLY         I don't know what you're talking about.

HUTCH        No. So if it wasn't for Emma, what was it for?

OLLY         I can't -  
                 There are standards.  
                 McKenzie was always going to fire you. He was.

HUTCH        And you think you're justified now?

OLLY         He was always going to do it. He was. I just made him do it faster.

*Becky and Olly's living room. The television is on; it intersperses their conversation.*

BECKY        Nice day?

OLLY         Not bad.

               You told the school. You told everyone.

BECKY        I don't need you to be my parent.

OLLY         I needed you to be my *sister*.

BECKY        It was for your own good.

OLLY         You could have told anyone. You could have told Mum and Dad.

BECKY        I figured this way had more results.

OLLY         He's not going to date you now.

BECKY        I don't want him to.

*Pause.*

BECKY        It was Hutch?

*Pause.*

BECKY        I saw him leaving. He was a good teacher, you know.

OLLY         Well, he made his bed.

BECKY        And you slept in it.

*Pause.*

BECKY      Is it over now?

              Olly? Is it over?

**PhD Full-Length Plays: *Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic Too*  
Play II of III**

**Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic Too**

by Morven Hamilton

***Dramatis Personae***

*Ally Gemmell – A Glaswegian dyed-in-the-wool Rangers supporter*

*Mo Gemmell – Ally's younger brother*

*The sounds of a football stadium on an Old Firm game day. Ally and Mo alone onstage. Ally starts up singing and waving his Rangers scarf.*

ALLY            *Ma faither wore it as a youth in bygone days a yore,  
And on the Twelfth ah luv tae wear the sash ma father wore.*

MO              We've no to sing that any more. Shu'up ya dickhead.

ALLY            Hye, this is the most important match of our fuckin lives. Sing what I want.

MO              They *tried* to stop the chantin. They did try. Alec Salmond got all up and feshed about it. Everybody did. I tried a bit with Ally. No with Dad.

ALLY            But see when it comes to an Old Firm match. Craig Paterson can talk over it on Sportsound all he wants before kick-off, but see if you listen to the crowd in the background --  
*And to tell them of my forefaithers who fought in days a yore,  
That I mit have the right tae wear the sash ma father wore!*  
Ulster blood and proud.

MO              You've never been to Northern Ireland in your life by the way.

ALLY            What about it?

MO              Nothin.

ALLY            Stop bein a gobshite then.

MO              There's nowhere I've been since that's got anythin like the Old Firm.  
Thank fuck.

ALLY            And now the referee's coming onto the pitch. The crowd is absolute belter.

MO The teams come up from the dunny.

ALLY The Teddys come out and we give it laldy.

MO And the Hoops come out, and Ally and Dad are spittin blood like always.

ALLY *Singin I'm no a Billy he's a Tim, singin ah'm no a Billy he's a Tim.*

MO And the referee blows his startin whistle.

ALLY You feel your heart right there in your fuckin mouth. Jumped up like it always fuckin lived there.

MO Because, you know, whatever way this goes you're gonnae feel it. Lose or win. You're livin it.

ALLY Nothin else to make you feel like that.

MO Except –

ALLY Nothin else.

MO It was a night like this it all kicked off. Parkhead was buzzin.

ALLY Smelt like potatoes. Irish.

MO That doesnae even make sense.

ALLY It well did. Probly still does.

MO Irish came to Scotland cuz they didn't have any potatoes.

ALLY And they can fuckin go back there too.

MO Parkhead was jumpin. When the match finished it was still buzzin. Whole city's just out for a fight like always.

ALLY           An we push through the crowds –

MO             It's busy so the three of us keep tight –

ALLY           You held Dad's hand –

MO             Did I fuck –

ALLY           And we're out.

MO             Onto Kerrydale Street.

ALLY           Onto *London* Street, cuz it's fuckin British.

MO             We're going to the bus stop.

ALLY           Dad and me are geein it laldy. Fuckin belting it out. Cuz we won; they got absolutely hammered.

MO             *Dad* got absolutely hammered.

ALLY           And there's these two Tims. They come out of absolutely fuckin nowhere right.

MO             They come from round the corner.

ALLY           Never forgot their faces. It's like I can always see them. One of them, right, he's got this face like Neil Lennon. Now I'm thinkin, I'm thinkin Christ, maybe it's him. Out from the dugout like the monster from the green lagoon.

MO             He wasnae in the dugout ya dick. Wasnae the manager then, was he? He was midfield.

ALLY           And he's fuckin dross at both by the way.



So here's this guy, got a face like fizz, the big ginge; red cheeks, ugly as fuckin sin, hulks up to us like naebdy's business. And he's got this mate with him as well. Face like the back end of a truck. They're both packin knives as well right. They try to act dead casual, but you can see the fuckin thing comin out the ginge's pocket. They're lookin for a fight. They're mad right cuz they lost the match that night, they're lookin for a couple of Teddys they can give a good daein.

An, just so we're square, me and dad, we're no fussed, we can take ourselves in a fight. We'll go fuckin round for round. But we've got wee Mo with us.

MO I was sixteen, ya prick.

ALLY Yeah but you're a scrawny wee bugger for sixteen. Looks about twelve right. Took after Mum more than Dad, if you know what I mean. Got this wee face. And here's these two guys looking to dae him in.

And Dad's no gonnae stand for that.

MO He didnae stand for much anyway; he was drunk as fuck any hour of the day.

ALLY And Dad's no gonnae stand for that, so he says here you, he says to the one that looks like Lennon, why don't you pick some cunt your own size. And that's just a pure joke right because this dick's massive – he's fuckin ginger Goliath, right, there's naebdy his size short of yon Jack an the fuckin Beanstalk – and he just looks at my dad right, and he's like -- go on then.

MO The bus we're waiting on, the 44 back to Gorbals. It chooses that minute to turn the corner. Big fuckin white double decker.

ALLY An this ginger twat, he looks at my dad, and he goes. Go on then. And he shoves him. Shoves him straight into the road.

MO My dad's drunk, he's always drunk. Absolutely paralytic. He doesn't even know what's gone on.

ALLY           The bus driver's no got time to react.

MO             Doesn't even put his brakes on.  
The bus, the 44, it was white, but I remember the front of it afterwards. Right up the front.

ALLY           The two Hoops lads; they take one look at what they've done, and they're fuckin cowards right; they do a runner before the driver's even aff the bus.

MO             So now it's just us left standin there. Us and our dead dad. An it's all kicked off now.

*Lights up on an Ayrshire crematorium.*

MO             The funeral came up really fast after that.  
Police gave us the quick go-round obviously, Ally tells the story and I just sit and nod, then the post mortem, bit of local press shifting about the street til they lost interest, found the next poor fucker for the front page.  
Then there were the family well-wishers, the whole bit - and then the funeral. I didn't go. Couldn't go. Everybody got all po-faced like they came from Edinburgh around me all of a sudden. He's only wee, the poor thing. He's in shock. It's the trauma of the thing you know. Imagine losing a parent like that. Imagine.

ALLY           Aye an I wanted to give you a fuckin batterin for it by the way. Only reason I didn't's cause Auntie Sheila would've got between us with her big tits up in my face and she says I'm to let you mourn in peace in your own way.  
Like fuck I am.

MO             And Ally says to me, the only way you're doin it's the fuckin family way.

ALLY           Who the fuck's that meant to be?

“The only way’s the fuckin family way.” Sound like I’m some divvy hard man.

MO Call a spade.

ALLY Fine. You’re a wee poofter who’s too much of a woman for a funeral. Spade’s a fuckin spade.

MO And Ally says to me, the only way’s the fuckin family way. Better?

ALLY Aye.

MO But Auntie Sheila and the others were like a big flowery human shield, so I didn’t have to go.

ALLY I was the big man at the funeral, man of the match, you know, only son – only *good* son – sittin in the front pew next to the coffin, got my brave face on.

The coffin, it’s on this conveyer belt thing, like you know the second the funeral’s done they get a shifty on and off it goes into the fire, and the next fucker’s lot gets drafted in, same thing with them, coffin on the conveyer belt, line up, line up. An that’s my dad in there, you know. Felt a bit – machiney. So I got a bit –

MO You wanted to have a greet.

ALLY Did I fuck. I wanted a fag ya dickhead. So I’m away outside. Crack the lighter out -- and there’s heid-the-baw standin there.

MO Fuckin Baltic out here man.

ALLY Come inside then.

MO Naw. Felt a bit – didn’t want to miss all of it.  
Just stood at the back for a bit.  
Said hi or whatever. In my head.

*Ally proffers the cigarettes.*

ALLY            You want one?

MO             Never smoked before.

ALLY            They're Dad's last ones.

*Mo retracts his hand.*

ALLY            Fuck off ya dick.

*Ally lights one and gives it to Mo. Mo takes it inexpertly, breathes in, and then chokes on it.*

ALLY            Fanny.

*Mo looks at the cigarette, considering.*

ALLY            Don't you fuckin dare pal. If you're stubbin it out give it here.

MO             I'm no.

ALLY            Then fuckin put it in your mouth and shut up.

MO             Feels like maybe this is like – maybe it's like somethin. Like - forgiveness.

ALLY            Christ almighty.

MO             Just sayin. You know. Bein Dad's. Like a last communion or somethin.

ALLY            Last... we're no fuckin *fenians*.

MO             Nah, not like – not like the body of Christ's in a Lucky Strike or - just somethin to share.

ALLY            Turn off the poetics, will you. You're no the fuckin minister.

*Ally returns to his cigarette.*

MO            Kinna funny though. Not – not this – but – don't you think Dad would think it was kinna funny? The minister's up there geein it laldy all about the tragedy of the accident and - 'Of John's love for God, we should say this –' and it's – I'm just bit lik – y'know - what fuckin love of God?

ALLY          Dad's a proddy. Dyed in the wool fuckin Proddy.

MO            Yeah but – I never heard him mention it or anythin.

ALLY          What are you on? He was always sayin how he was a Proddy, Proddy against the Tims.

MO            Yeah -- never mentioned *God* though, did he.

ALLY          Didn't have to fuckin mention it did he?  
You just – you just know. In your deepest fuckin whatever.  
Fuck's sake.

*Ally angles himself away slightly. This whole conversation screams awkwardness to him. He doesn't talk about deep and meaningfuls. Ever.*

MO            He wasnae churchy though.  
I mean, he used to say he was going down the kirk when we were wee, but he never was – he was just down the Steps Bar having a kid on.

ALLY          Jist because you don go to church, doesn't – Dad's – Dad was a proddy.

MO            It's no like Judaism though though is it?

ALLY          No. Because we're no fuckin Jewish.

MO            I meant, you know, you're a Jew even if you don't do the Jewish bits. You're born it. Dip the fish. Still Jewish.

It's just – what does it even mean, then, being a Proddy, if you don't care about the actual – you know – the actual God bit?  
If you don't practice it, how are you still...

ALLY            Fuck's sake -

MO              I mean, you're no born it, you're no born a Proddy –

ALLY            - aye y'are –

MO              - It's no just fitball – it's the religious bit as well.

ALLY            And we're doin the fuckin religious bit now, or what did you think the Faither was talkin about? The fuckin weather?

MO              Just sayin'. I don't see how Dad was any more Proddy than you and me.

ALLY            You bloody well have gone Jewish. Went and got your dick snipped.  
We're Proddies. We're all Proddies.  
Dad. Me. You. The fuckin neighbours. All of us. Proddies.

MO              Then what are we doin outside during the sermon.

ALLY            I don't fuckin know why you are. You don't even smoke.  
I never asked you to, I never goes 'Comin to follow me and act like a wank for a bit', did I?

MO              Jus checkin you were okay.

ALLY            Fine. Just wanted fresh air.

*Mo gestures pointedly at Ally's cigarette. Hardly fresh.*

ALLY            Smells of pigs.

MO              It's a crematorium. Smells of lighter fluid and pickles.

ALLY Smells like the two pigs that did for him. Like they're followin him in the after life.

MO They're no dead.

ALLY Aye, watch, I'll soon change that.

MO Don't.

ALLY Because it's a funeral?  
Dad wouldn't care. He's up there now lovin it.

MO They didn't do anything.

ALLY You defendin them now?

MO You know it wasnae their fault.

ALLY Like they didn't mean to push him.

MO I know it's what we told the polis but...

ALLY Haven't even caught the fuckers yet.  
Polis are a fuckin joke. Couldn't organise a piss up in a brewery.

MO You know they were just there. Wrong place, wrong time.

ALLY Damn fuckin right wrong place. Get out of Scotland, ya ginger dickheads.

MO It wasnae their fault an you know it. You've got to know it.

ALLY Nah. Nah. Don't go standing up for them now. You can fuck off, you and Mo Johnston.  
Go on. Get to fuck.

MO Ally couldn't get it out of his head that.

Dad named us for Rangers. Everything he did, had to be Rangers. Mum didn't get a look-in. See Ally was '87, so he got Ally McCoist, the great Coisty, best striker Rangers ever had. Fuckin joke by the way because Ally, my Ally I mean –

ALLY I'm no your Ally, I'm my own fuckin Ally –

MO Ally McCoist's the greatest striker of all time, and my Ally, this Ally – if you gave him an empty net and goalposts from here to Lands' End, he'd still put it wide. Pure shite. But Ally fuckin loves it. Says you know – Dad was proud of him, thought he'd be our own wee Coisty, be our star player.

Mine wasn't... mine wasn't like that. See I was born 89, right, and 89, we signed Mo Johnston. Johnston gets remembered for two things – being the second Roman Catholic player we ever had – and the Gers fuckin hate him to start with – and then for scoring a goal against Celtic when we play them in the Champions League. The Hoops scream bloody murder and call him Judas all over the park. Suddenly, wee Mo, he's not lookin so bad from our side.

Now, far as my dad's concerned, the guy's still a Tim, but Dad's got bigger problems:

Mum's sister married a Catholic, and Dad wants the in-laws to like him more. They never do, because whatever he names his sons, he's still the scaffy boozier that had aff with their daughter.

So here's me, Wee Mo Gemmell, named after a Catholic who my Dad never even liked. For all his troubles, Dad gets shit all out of it. That's what he said.

Ally never stopped goin on about it. Not then. Not ever.

ALLY If you're going to stand up for those two at your dad's own funeral, you can fuck off. The Tims got it right on that one – Mo Johnston, Mo Gemmell, you're both a fuckin Judas.



*The Gemmell living room.*

- ALLY            When I got home that night, I knew things were different.
- MO              I left the funeral after Ally went in. I couldn't go back in then – couldn't stomach it, couldn't face that Ally was pissed with me, so I went home.  
Mum came home from the wake a bit early, and Ally wasnae with her. She said he was staying with the well-wishers, but I think we both knew what that meant. He'd gone to the pub.  
Mum was greetin and I was just kind of – cold inside. Hard to say. I didn' know what the fuck to do with myself. Made five cups of tea in the space of twenty minutes, until Mum told me to sit the fuck down.  
We sat at the table for a bit and didn' say anything, but... we both knew where Ally was an didn' say anything. Felt like we were bonding.  
Didn't last long.
- ALLY            Just something in the air. So I'm walkin on absolute eggshells when I come in.
- MO              When Ally came in he was off his face wasted.  
He flung the front door open like it was comin off its hinges. I was sitting in the kitchen with my fuckin terracotta army of teamugs, and I heard him bangin about, and goes to myself, there's Dad in from the pub.  
Didn't even realise I'd done it, until I was already shoutin through to him, somethin about the match the day.  
Don't even remember what I said, only that I got halfway through the sentence and practically shat myself.
- ALLY            I might have been a bit on the tipsy side right, but I knew something was up.
- MO              I go through into the living room, an I'm all braced for Ally to rip into me about it, tell me what a twat I am, and there he is, passed out on the couch,

full on snoring like a knackered chainsaw.

ALLY Just got a sense about stuff like this, you know. Dead sensitive.

MO It's almost kinofa comfort. Some things don't change. Mum's gone, and Ally's absolutely fuckin oblivious.

*Next morning.*

ALLY Back when we were wee, our Mum, she used to make these breakfasts, you couldnae match it. Bacon and sausage and tattie scones – couldnae match it. Used to make them for us on a Saturday on game day.  
Then when we were older, if we were mebbe in a bit of a state from the night before, you know, no like that happened a lot obviously, mebbe only, aye, every weekend, you know, but she'd be there with this legend of a breakfast, angel with a fried egg. So I wake up that morning, think about it for a sec, remember I'm on the couch from last night, and then I smell the cooking comin from the kitchen, and I'm thinking, aw, lads, we're well in. I was so fuckin wrong.

*Mo puts a burnt bacon roll down in front of Ally.*

ALLY What the fuck's this?

MO Breakfast.

ALLY Why you cookin?

MO Mum's no here.

ALLY I'll wait til she's back. No touchin that wi a fuckin barge pole.

MO Gonnae just eat it.

ALLY            Fuckin coal on a roll. I'll wait. Who taught you to cook by the way.

MO             Home Ec.

ALLY            Standard Grade in cooking. Ya big lassie.

MO             They made us.

ALLY            You must've skipped a class.

MO             Fuck off. I got an A for cookery.

*Ally examines the plate.*

ALLY            Did you give the teacher a handjob?

MO             The non-stick's knackered. Best I could do.

ALLY            Then you shouldn't have fuckin bothered.

MO             Mum's out.

ALLY            You said.

MO             I mean like out out.

ALLY            Out like ... she's a lesbo out?

MO             No. I mean like – she's no coming back, out.

ALLY            No comin back til when?

*Mo says nothing. Ally gets up.*

ALLY            Where's she gone?

MO             Sit down.

ALLY Will I fuck.

MO Where you goin?

ALLY Tell us where she went. I'll catch her up.

MO Like fuck. You're no gettin in the car.

ALLY It's my car.

MO Only cuz Dad left it you.

ALLY Aye, left it me no you; I'll do whatever the fuck I want.

MO You're still plastered.

ALLY I'm a good driver.

MO You're a fuckin pisspoor driver.

ALLY Handbrake turns and everythin.

MO You'll crash it before you're out the street.

ALLY Fuck off.

MO Or you'll get pulled over and breathalysed.

ALLY They'll no catch me. I'm fuckin Batman.

MO You're no goin.

ALLY Try and stop me.

*Ally gets up and stumbles out. Then comes back.*

ALLY Where the fuck's the keys.

MO Sit down and eat your roll.

ALLY I can still catch her.  
Gonnae just...

MO She's no just left. She's been gone a bit.

ALLY When.

MO Last night.

ALLY Last fuckin night? Why did you no tell me when I came in?

*Mo just looks at him, looks at the couch.*

ALLY She'll be stayin with Joan down the road.  
Needs a bit of woman-a-womano.  
She was aye away down there when she an Dad had a set-to. I'll go  
pick her up.

MO Naw. Naw. It's no that. No this time.

*A pause.*

ALLY She's no topped herself.

MO No – of course she's no – what -

ALLY Just you've got a face like I killed your dug.

MO That's my normal face.  
She's away to stay with the family.

ALLY Which family.

MO Well it's no like to be Dad's is it.

ALLY She's gone to the Scanlans.

MO           Aye.

ALLY         Dad's barely cold in the ground --

MO           They burned him; there's no a body to --

ALLY         Dad's barely fuckin incinerated then -- and she's off back to the Paddy Scanlans?

MO           They're her family.

ALLY         So're we.

MO           Mebbe she needed them more the now.

ALLY         Nah. Nah. They came round, didn't they.

MO           No --

ALLY         Nah, don't be soft. They came round, they came round and pulled some fuckin witchy business to get her back.

MO           Mebbe she just didn't want to be around us, after...

ALLY         After her husband gets a daein off the Tims, she goes away back to her Paddy sister?

MO           She's no -- she's married one, that doesn't mean she is one.

ALLY         Nah. Not likely. They've had her. They've done some witchy business. Where's my keys.

MO           Leave her alone.

ALLY         Where's my fuckin keys.

*A stand off.*

MO I thought he was gonnae lay into me then, give me a fuckin leatherin, an I wasn gonnae fight him about it. Kinof thought I probably deserved it. No tellin him what was goin on. He looks at me and thinks about it and then he just storms aff.

Where you goin?

ALLY I'll fuckin walk.

*Out on the street.*

*Out on the street.*

ALLY See, I'm no thick. I know walkin from ours to the Scanlans is a fuckin trek. But – now I'm out the house, I can't just turn around an go back, not without lookin like a wanker. So here's me, marchin mysel down the road at eleven in the morning, still wearin a funeral suit an fuckin dress shoes like I've never worn in my life by the way. I'm no leavin Mum wi the Tims. Mo can say what he wants; Auntie Annie married a Paddy; that makes her one, an my mum's no stayin there.

See Annie used to come round the house sometimes when we were wee.

She was always there givin it big licks to me an Mo about how we'd no to listen to our dad; to remember that Tims are just the same as us.

She'd aye be on about how, remember Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic too.

Well, she can jog on eh.

I tell her Wee Mo's just lucky Dad didn name him Lorenzo instead or I'd have been rippin the piss 24/7. Now fuck off out of it.

So she an I never hit it off. She stopped comin when she knew she couldnae make us converts, so what does that tell you. Only after one thing.

Didnae really care about us, did she.

It's about two in the afternoon before I finally make it over there. When I get to the front door, I gee the chapper a knock. Nothin. I bang it again.

They've got these blinds right, the kinof cream Venetian kind always get fankled that they've all got round here, think they're dead brow like,  
and there's this wee face peeps out.

It's only fuckin Annie's wee boy, who's about seven by the way and thinks he's the absolute business, wearin his hoops shirt.

He looks through the blinds at me like I've no seen him, like I'm no fuckin lookin right at him, right, and then he's awa again.

This is fuckin beyond a joke now so I give the door a proper hammer, an it swings open,  
an there's Annie staunin there, lookin at me like it's fuckin my fault.

MO (*as Ann.*) Have you been drinking?

ALLY Here, her voice is higher than that.

MO Take it or leave it.

ALLY Snootier.

MO (*as Ann.*) Have you been drinking, Alastair?

ALLY Naebdy calls me Alastair, by the way. Where the fuck's my mum?

MO But she doesn't know.

ALLY The fuck she doesn't.  
See I've got a pretty good sense of humour when it comes to it  
an this is a fuckin belter of a joke now,



because I can see it on the floor,  
my mum's handbag,

MO Her what?

ALLY It's right there.  
The fuckin pink fake leather thing Dad got her down the Barras.  
So we're just staunin there for a minute lookin at each other.

MO (*as Ann.*) You're not coming in in that state.

ALLY I'm no in a state.

MO (*as Ann.*) There's the wee one in the front room.

ALLY She's only scared I'll turn him. Show him who the real champions are.

MO Yeah that's it. No that she could smell last night's Special Brew.

ALLY If you're so sure my mum's not there, why don't you let me in and I'll check.

MO Ally, she's no there. She never was.

ALLY That you, or her?

MO Her.

ALLY Sounded more like you.

MO It wasnae.

ALLY Anyway, the fucking bitch – next thing, she's turning it on me: what did I do to make her leave? But if my mum's no here, how does Annie know she's left?

MO With you battering the door down. Call it a hunch.

ALLY

Nah, I've caught her now.

She obviously doesnae realise she's dropped herself in it because she starts for a minute like this wee Catholic rabbit, and then she says, if you're going to come in here, I'm going to call the police, and then she slams the door in my face so hard the glass in the panels shatters over my heid. Wee flecks of it all over my hair.

I think about it for a sec, but I'm a good guy, right. I could just shoulder the door down an in an get Mum and then we're awa but...

Fuckin Mo. Had to walk here, didn't I? I mean how far am I gointae get if she calls the polis, and I've had it to the absolute back teeth of polis this week anyway fuckin pig sick wi them no doing anything anyway and aye, maybe still a bit drunk an sweatin absolute bullets, so mebbe I'll give it a rest for now. I give the door a last thud just for guid measure, and then I'm off.

Decide I'm no walkin back the same way, spur of the moment, maybe I'll take the scenic route. Walk back through the Linn Crematorium, go pay some respect, you know, up past Dad, but it's too soon yet an they've no put a headstone, so I keep goin.

All I'm thinkin is it's gonnae be an absolute fuckin embarrassment if I go home to Mo now an no Mum with me, how's that goin to look, so naw, I'm no goin home yet.

An, you know, the sun's over the yard arm, so I'm away to the pub.

*Home.*

MO

When Ally storms off, I know he's bein stubborn. He always is. I think about goin after him in the car, but then I figure it's probably best to let him stew for a bit, so I start puttin the house thegether. Mum's stuff and dad's stuff all kickin about, like it's only been days, an, you know, it has. Only been a week. I'm sat there lookin at all this stuff, an I must lose track of time right because the next thing, I get this phone call. It's Auntie Annie.

I haven't spoken to her since we were wee, an she's fuckin furious like I've never heard.

She says to me she's just had Alastair at the house

– and it's only then I even remember she used to call him that – I've just had Alastair at the house, Maurice.

I don't stop her to say, you know, there's no Maurice on my birth certificate. There isnae. It's just Mo.

Dad didnae know what Mo was short for, so that's all I got.

I don't stop her though. Just let her go for a minute. She's just had Alastair round, and by all rights she ought to be calling the police. Ally's been banging on her door for the best part of an hour, terrified the neighbours, had the weans upstairs crying.

She says he's hit the door so hard it's smashed the glass and they're going to have to call somebody out to repair it.

When she came out to speak to him, he was off his face, she says, and did I know had he had anything to drink today?

I say last night, but she says that'll no cover it, an I think, well, mebbe if he got the bus, well, he probably had time for a few.

She says she ought to be calling the police, and the only reason she wasn't was because of our mum sayin no.

No because we're her family, she never says that, not anymore, but because our mum is. An thank fuckin god for that I say, but where is he now.

She doesnae know. Chased him out. But Mo, she says, I don't know what's gone on in that house, but if he's done anything – Ally, she means, although it sounds a bit like she's said Dad, like they're the same, you know – if he's done anything to Mum... If he's laid a hand on her, like John used to do, then...

It's – I suppose if I was a better brother I'd have been off out lookin for him then. Go pick him up from wherever, set him down, clean him up like a fuckin wean.

I guess I could've, but I put the phone down, and then I don't know what happens. I'm callin this other number before I even know what I'm doin.

Alright Shiv, it's me. Hi.

*School grounds.*

- MO See, before all this kicked off, I'd just started seeing this girl.
- ALLY An when he says seein he means *seein*. Wouldn't know how to shag a girl if you gave him an open pair of legs and an instruction manual.
- MO Eh an what girl's givin you the time of day?
- ALLY Your mum.
- MO Ally never got that you couldnae say that to your brother.
- ALLY An Mo never got laid.
- MO Until now.
- ALLY Believe it when I see it.
- MO Didnae think you were into that.
- ALLY Fuck off.
- MO Anyway, I met this girl.  
See the school was sending me to Langside College to do this after school class in Employment Law –
- ALLY No fuckin wonder he's a virgin by the way.
- MO An don't get me wrong, the class is borin as fuck, but it's somethin, mebbe somethin I could do that pays, so I'll go.  
There's this girl in the class, she's like – actually, I can't say it was like she blew me away or whatever, it wasn't like that, she's a stunner right aye but I never even really saw her the first day. We

just got to chattin after and then it was like we clicked. It's no a looks thing. It's... something deeper than that.

ALLY It would have to be. If it was a looks thing you'd be fuckin scunnered.

MO What you've got to get about our local school - if you're at Netherwood, you're either Rangers or you're from Pakistan. Just how it is. An sometimes you're both, because you know which side your bread's buttered. You support Rangers no matter what. Easier just to go with the crowd. When they send me to Langside but, we're in with any old bunch. You don't know who you're sittin with. Some of them are our lot but not that many. Some are college, some of them are from other schools around. This girl I'm sittin with - I don't even think to pay attention where she's from until about two weeks in, and we're already hittin it off by then. I've got her MSN, we're textin an you know, sendin pictures an stuff, like you do -

ALLY Look at the blush on that. Probably sends her a picture of somedy else's dick.

MO Seems like there might be somethin there, an I guess I just don't ask. It's no until she starts lettin me sit with her, and right, I'm well in then - I notice what she writes on the top of all her notes. She's got this handwriting that's just - it's like fuckin fine art, and she writes it, AMDG, on the top corner of every sheet. I think it's her initials to start with, think she's really paranoid she'll lose her notes, but it's no. I know her name now and it's no that. So I ask. Heigh, what's this. AMDG - *Ad Maiora Dei Gloriam*. To the greater glory of God. She's from the Wallydishes. Or if you're givin its Sunday name - St Aloysius College, Independent Jesuit School for Roman Catholics. Talk about a fuckin spanner in the works. I don't tell Ally. I definitely don't tell Dad. This family - we've gone down that route before. It doesn't end well.

ALLY            So who's this lassie you're layin into?

MO             I'm no.

ALLY            Come on, you can tell.

MO             There's naebdy.

ALLY            It's no a bloke is it?

MO             There's naebdy.

ALLY            So if I'd eh nicked your phone say –

MO             Giz it back.

ALLY            Ask nice.

MO             Giz it back twatbag.

ALLY            Come oan. Tell your big brother.

MO             None of your business.

ALLY            So there is a girl.

MO             You fuckin know there is.

ALLY            Mebbe I'm just good at reading my brother.

MO             Or good at reading my fuckin texts.

ALLY            Yeah mebbe it was that. 'How's it goin babe lookin forward to seein  
you next week think mebbe we could share notes' – I hope that's a  
fuckin euphemism by the way.  
So what's her name?

MO            You read my texts. Why don't you work it out.

ALLY         I would but you saved her name as a fuckin £ sign.

MO            I had. I'm stupid but I'm no that stupid. Ally was always stealin my stuff. Best just to have a back up plan, right.

Giz my fuckin phone back.

Sarah. Her name's Sarah. Now giz it back.

ALLY         Only had to ask.

MO            It was the first time I'd lied to Ally, but it was probably the first time it mattered. Because I was really in deep now. Pullin a proper Mo Johnstone on him, on Dad too.

Her name wasn't Sarah. It was Siobhan. That's Siobhan with a b and an h and probably a z.

Don't think I need to tell you where she's from.

*Darkened living room.*

MO            So my brother's out getting smashed. Nae parents to speak of. First thing I do – call Shiv. Because – I'm not sorry right, I'm not sorry – because I haven't seen her in a fuckin age. Not since before the funeral.

I don't want to burden her with it or whatever, so I don't let on what's gone on. Which mebbe that seems a bit weird, eh. But I don't want the touchy feely conversation.

The room's just the same as it always is; no signs sayin anybody's deid – Mum didnae want any sympathy cards around – so I pass it off to her I've just had a rough few days you know, exam revision an that. She goes for it. Comes round, we chat for a bit, school, employment law, real heavy stuff, an then we get down to it.

We're, you know, we're just messin about like you do – an in walks Ally.

ALLY            Fuckin hell.

MO             I say walks. He kinof shambles. Bits of cuts on his face. Suit's a mess. He's plastered.

ALLY            Fuckin hell. Did you want to warn us or - ?

MO             Shiv's barely even realised someone's here an I'm up off the couch like naebdy's business, pullin my jeans back on.

ALLY            He's a fuckin spanner about it as well, and he gets his boxers fankled in the zip. If I hadn't jus about seen my brother get his rocks off –

MO             You're the one says 'I'll believe it when I see it.'

ALLY            If I hadn't seen that - I'd be absolutely pissin myself.

                  Eh take your time.

MO             Gonnae giz a minute.

ALLY            Naw naw I can wait.

MO             I can tell Ally's gonna be a prick about this but it's – I'm that fuckin mortified I can't even work my fingers. Shiv's got it easy right, she's wearin a dress an she just heuchs it back down and she's up. Next thing she's tryin to - I don't know, wants to diffuse things, defend me or something.  
She puts her hand out to Ally.

ALLY            Here I'm no touchin that – I don't know where it's been.

MO             S'been on me.

ALLY            That's even worse.



MO See there's a thing I forgot to tell her. Just never seemed to come up you know. Or – it did and I didn't want it between us mebbe. I didn't tell her about Ally an my dad. Didn't tell her they were Billy Boys.

ALLY *They* are. Sayin you're not?

MO I wish I had but I thought she might think I was at it, mebbe seein her for a bet or mebbe tryin to hurt her, make some big joke, so I never told her.  
Now she's holdin out her hand to Ally. Hi, we haven't met, she says. I'm Siobhan.

There's a pause. I wonder whether I could harikari myself on a kitchen knife.

ALLY You got another bird you didn't tell me about?

MO Shiv looks at me like – eh, what...

ALLY What happened to Sarah?

MO See I'm standin there with my broken jeans and my pants out right, and suddenly they're both looking at me now. Got a choice to make, haven't I?

Either I tell Shiv there's somebody else - oh aye, yeah, Sarah, she's Tuesdays and Fridays, didn't I tell you love – it's that, or I tell Ally the truth.

Seconds counting down, fuckin Countdown theme's givin it laldy, and I panic. Mebbe it's Shiv's face, an, that I need her, need that face around, you know - or mebbe it's because I'm cuttin family ties all over the map this week, so why not go the full kahoona – an then -

This is her.

ALLY Says her name's Siobhan.

MO            Yeah.

ALLY         You said Sarah.

MO            Must've got confused.

ALLY         Takes you a month to learn her name does it. You get distracted?  
Must have some great tits on you there hen.  
How are we spellin that. Siobhan. S-h-u-v-o-n?  
Or is it maybe a bit more Irish than that.

MO            Ally –

ALLY         That's a fuckin Paddy name.

MO            It's –

ALLY         Nah nah fuck off. You lied about it. You know fuckin well. Doesn't  
take a scientist.

MO            I think mebbe Ally's about to beat the shit out of me, and I tell  
Siobhan mebbe she should go –

ALLY         Aye, away back where you came from.

MO            Tell her I'll give her a call later. She's all aye okay no shit Sherlock,  
and she leaves.  
I watch her go, an all I think is that if I lose her *and* Ally over this,  
I'll be royally fucked off.  
The door clicks shut. Ally looks like he might punch through it.  
Wouldn't be the first time today, would it.  
He turns round to me, an I know this is it. This is what it's all  
coming to.  
See – this family, we've been here before.

When we were wee, Auntie Annie used to babysit a lot. Mum used  
to work in the caf and Annie'd come round and look after us.

Annie was – like a blip on the map; a really, really good person, she was. Inside and out. If I was gonnae be preachy about it, I'd say it was like she had a gid soul, but then, I don't know fuck all about god. Just about hate.

Annie didn't hate anybody. She knows better now but she used to, just – she had it in her to love everybody. Told us to love everybody. Remember Lorenzo Amoruso was a Catholic too.

For God so loved the world, so Annie loved me and Ally.

Ally though, he used to hate it. He was already the spit of Dad practically since birth. Hates the Tims even before he knows why. When Annie'd come round, he'd fuck off out of it in a fizzer, go and strop in his room.

I loved it though, fuckin loved her comin round, loved bein around her. She was younger than Mum right an I used to pretend like she was my sister as well as Mum's. So she says to me once, tell you what, let me bring Brian round to visit, Brian's this mate of mine. Is he your boyfriend, I says, because I'm eight but I'm a fuckin nosey eight, and she's, well, maybe, but he'll need the a-okay from you first. Why, I says, and she says well, I need the men in my life to get on.

My eyes are practically on stalks right. I'm a *man* in her life, right. She's only jokin around mind cuz I'm only eight right, but it meant somethin.

So the next week Brian comes roun with Annie.

ALLY (*as Bri.*) Good efternoon to you, Maurice, gid fellow.

MO He was from Newton Mearns, not the dark ages.

ALLY Fuckin weirdo with a beardo.

MO Like you'd know. You were upstairs having a crafty wank.

ALLY (*as Bri.*) Good efternoon, Maurice.

MO Hullo.

ALLY Here, you'd a higher voice than that.

MO            Fuck off.

ALLY (*as Bri.*) Can I interest you in a wee bit of Catholicism there, Maurice?

MO            He never.  
See the thing about Brian – we get on okay. I mean, for two people both trying to be Annie’s number one guy here, we’re alright. An after a bit, I get up the balls, and I ask him – here which side are you on?

ALLY (*as Bri.*) Wull, I can answer that for you there friend. I am a dirty Irish.

MO            (*ignoring him*) Annie looks a bit kinna disappointed with me, but Brian says no no, he’s only asking, curiosity is good for wee boys, and he tells me he’s a lapsed Catholic.  
I’m only wee, right, I don’t know the word ‘lapsed’, so my guess is it’s mebbe a place, you know, like Roman Catholic or ...Chinese Catholic, or whatever, you know, hullo, I’m a Lapsed – like maybe he’s from fuckin Lapland.  
I don’t know for sure though, and I don’t want to ask Brian because he seems pretty smart and I don’t want to look like a spacker in front of Annie.

ALLY           So to prove he’s not a spacker, he decides to ask Dad.

MO            Like you remember.

ALLY           You fuckin bet I do. Up comes heidthebaw, bold as brass over the mashed tatties, ‘Here Da, I met a lapsed Catholic today’.

MO            Dad wouldn’t let me warn Annie. He stalked about in a creampuff for the three days before she was due back. Normally I’d be keen her comin round, but the way the veins were popping in Dad’s face – not this time. Annie’s about to get it in the teeth.  
Dad walks around with a face like fizz right until she walks in the door and then *fwoosh*. He gives her the absolute bollocking of her

natural born life. I think mebbe she might greet, but she doesn't. She just waits.

When he's done, it's like something just goes, just shuts down. She gives me a hug, so quick I barely get my arms up, then just turns and leaves. Dad's there on the lawn shoutin after her, 'An don't you fuckin come back, ya whorin bitch'.

I see red. It's the first time I talk back to Dad.

*Don't be so fuckin stupid, eh. Does it look like she'd ever comin back when you're around?*

He gives me a proper skelp then, but I'm no sorry. I was Annie's wee man more than I'd ever been his, and he's fucked it all up now.

Watching Siobhan walk out the door this time– it's like I've seen this all before, but – Ally's a different thing from Dad, eh.

So are we gonnae talk about this  
or are you just gonnae stand there makin sex eyes at me.

ALLY        Fuck off.  
              Nothin to talk about.

MO            Gone all strong and silent type all of a sudden.

ALLY        I've always been fuckin stronger than you pal.

*Brief square off.*

MO            Anybody else his size I'd be scared. But Ally – he looks out for me. He's no nice about it or anything, but his heart's – somewhere near the right place, most of the time. Like, mebbe not exactly *right*, but in the vicinity. He protects me. No matter what. He gets my back. Fights my battles. Lies to the police. Naebdy else, but if it's me... Because Ally protects me. That's what he does. He's got a, you know, an Achilles Heel for me like.  
So see he's standin there now, actin like he's gonnae give me a square go, an I pull it out of the bag.

I know. Look. I should've told you she was a...

ALLY           A fuckin dirty Tim.

MO             Should've said she was Catholic. But – I didn't think you'd like it an  
– she makes me happy. This whole thing's gone to shit, everything  
we've got is fucked, and she isn't. She's just happy. And I want that.

ALLY           An you want me to just... Fucksake.

MO             An this is all – well, maybe it is a crock of shit, maybe it isn't – but  
either way. Ally backs off. Just... deflates. Slinks out and that's the  
end of it.  
He'd beat the shit out of me, but he's not going to get between me  
and what he thinks I need. Not really.  
I'm a proper manipulative shit when I want to be.

*Fade.*

*Police station.*

ALLY           Dad, he always used to have this sayin, you know. Don't go to bed  
angry, son, he'd say, don't go to bed angry.

MO             That's, *Ally, every night before you go to bed, just gee your mum a  
doin. You'll be sorted.*

ALLY           I could fuckin punch you in the teeth.

MO             But you don't.

ALLY           Nah I fuckin don't. And Dad always said that, right, so, I'm out the  
house. I'm no fuckin stupid though, so I've got the car keys this  
time. I'm in the car an off before you can say 'Mo's a sheep-  
shagger'.  
Dunno where I'm goin to start with, just kina drivin, an then I  
think, you know, I've got this thing burnin in there, startin for a  
fight, makes you fuckin brave, doesn't it, and I think mebbe I'll use

it. Make it useful. Don't go to bed angry pal. So I'm off down the polis.

I'm not goin to pick a fight right. I'm no fuckin suicidal. No just marchin in there an haulin off on the first prick I find inside the station, even though I could. I mean I'd fuckin take them all like I'm in The fuckin 300, right. This - is - RANGERS. But I've got a bone to pick right, so I pull the car up outside, and I'm proper braced for this right: deep breathe, stomach in, balls out, get my march on.

Hye. Yis.

MO (*as officer*) Why yes, son, what can I help you with.

ALLY Don't you son me pal. I'm only one fucker's son, and he's gone by the by, and you've done fuck all about it.

MO Came on a bit strong there, eh?

ALLY He shouldnae've called me son. Kept at it the whole time. I'm wantin these two cunts up against a wall so I can pick their faces out the line up and get them fuckin sent down for life, mebbe get them get the chair just for the occasion right, but the polis, they're no doin fuck all. All jus sittin around like this jakey with the glasses.

MO (*as officer*) Well, I'm sorry son, but there's nothing to go on.

ALLY Say again pal. I've spent forever and amen givin you what for on what happened. What more do you need?  
I'll fuckin draw you a picture if you like.  
Just two ginger kids and 'These are the dicks' written on it.

MO What good would that do?

ALLY Eh?

MO Why would you draw a picture of they kids?

ALLY            That's no what he said. He goes 'Eh, that'll no be necessary, son.'  
And then he goes to me, they can't corroborate it. No CCTV. Only  
two witnesses. Discrepancies in the story, he says.  
My dad's awa, and they're fannyin about over fucking  
*discrepancies*.

MO              Did he explain you what that meant?

ALLY            Fuck off.  
I'm up to high ninety now by the way, I'm gonnae absolutely go for  
it in a sec, and I think he knows, cause then he blurts out - there  
was a bus driver.

MO (*slowly*)   A bus driver.

ALLY            That's what I said. Of course there was a fuckin bus driver. Did  
they think the bus drove its fuckin self?

MO              And the bus driver's given a statement.

ALLY            Apparently the bus driver didnae see what we did.

*Fade.*

MO              I phone Shiv after Ally leaves. She's alright. It's a Christmas  
miracle. I chat with her a bit, tell her Ally's got the car so I'll see her  
tomorrow. It's mebbe an hour - I mean she's doin the talkin right  
obviously cuz m'no a woman, I don't spend hours on the phone -  
an then I tell her you know, eh, alright, night love,  
an that's love like you know, affectionate, not like *love* love, but eh,  
see you tomorrow, and I get off.  
Straight off, the phone goes again and I -

Just couldn't get enough of me eh?

ALLY            Oh yeah. Fuckin love the boobie me.



MO           Fucksake.

ALLY         How long can you be on the fuckin phone for? You're payin for that by the way.

MO           Am I fuck. You're the one's got a fuckin giro, and I'm still at school so -

ALLY         Right right shut up - shut up right. No the point. You fuckin – just stay at home, right.

MO           Where are you?

ALLY         Comin home right but they're tryin to have us Mo.

MO           Who is.

ALLY         The fuckin polis. They're trying to fuckin pull the wool right, but we can't let them.

MO           What are you even on about?

ALLY         They're sayin, sayin the bus driver, he didn't see what happened but what he thinks he saw is – he didn't see the fuckin Tims man.

MO           My stomach just about drops out through my feet I think, but then –

ALLY         An they're gonnae get the fuckin Tims in there an fuckin corroborate the evidence an that'll be it.

MO           And that's it.  
Suddenly this bus driver, it doesn't matter what he thinks he saw. See, I'm doin this law course right. The one I met Shiv. Scots Law – there's this thing called corroboration. Makes Scots Law unique in the whole fuckin world. To prove fuckin anything in a Scots Law court – prove anybody got out of fuckin bed in the morning, is like

gettin all the animals into Noah's ark. Two bits of evidence, two witnesses for every fact. Some fuckin no-mates-Nigel gets up in front of a judge and says he did it, that's still no enough for the Scots – see that's only the one bit of evidence, even if it absolutely fuckin nails him. You need two. So see if there's a murder, an no evidence, an only one witness, an you're denyin all knowledge? You're fuckin free as a bird.

ALLY The Tims though. They'll testify an the polis'll believe them. They always believe the Tims first.

MO Away. They'll no come.

ALLY No when they were suspects. Now they can get us they'll be out the woodwork like nobody's business.

MO Ally, they're fuckin twelve years old.

ALLY Are they fuck.

MO They're only wee. They'll have ran home to their mams and no come back.

ALLY Nah. They're hidin out. Fuckin *lurkers*. I can feel it. Just waitin to fuckin ruin us.

MO You still at the station?

ALLY Aye right. Like fuck was I hangin around waitin for the pigs to do me in.

MO Then –

ALLY They're just bidin time Mo. Trust your big brother. They'll be back.

MO I should've known somethin was up then.  
Ally can chunter on about the two big Catholics that got his Dad all he likes when the polis are about, give it big licks until they believe

it - but when it's just the two of us right – those two big hulking Tims that did for Dad - they were a pair of speccy twelve year olds, no much older than Auntie Annie's wee yin really. Probably first match they'd been to without their Dad, and they're from the South side, with the posh accents. Don't know they're born, right. One of them was a wee bit ginger right and they both had the hoops shirts, but that's it.

Ally's on as if they're the fuckin Parkhead mafia, and there's no-one listenin but me.

MO            You're drunk.

ALLY         Your fuckin mum's drunk.

MO            Where's the car?

ALLY         I'm in it.

MO            Where?

ALLY         Fuckin Barbados.

MO            Ally.

ALLY         Don't go out the house.

*Dark living room.*

MO            I didn't. I waited in all night.  
Ally's a no-show until the next morning  
- and then he rocks up with his fuckin leg in a cast.  
Turns out if you're enough of a div you can do eighty mile an hour drunk down the Kingston Bridge without a scratch, an then crash your car into a fuckin lamp-post two streets away from the house.  
Car's a fuckin write-off by the way.

Guy down Kwik Fit says it's a minor crash but it's shifted the whole chassis of the car so the fuckin engine's not aligned anymore. It's no the only one.

Here.

ALLY        Fuck's that?

MO         Big Mac. Thought since you couldn't get out the house.

ALLY        Don't need you to feed me.

MO         Eh I'm no doin here comes the aeroplane by the way.

ALLY        Didn need to bring it.

MO         Thought mebbe it'd help.

ALLY        Tryin to lift my fuckin spirits? Rally me round? Don't need it. Got loads of spirits right here.

MO         No that much. You've nearly gone through Dad's drinks cabinet.

ALLY        'Cabinet'. S'a shelf in a cupboard ya dosser.

MO         S'a fuckin empty shelf now.

ALLY        Wasnae that much to begin wi.

MO         Nah. Dad wouldn't let drink sit long enough.

ALLY        Found some sherry.

MO         What's he doin with a fuckin sherry?

ALLY        Mum liked a wee swally.

MO         Never saw that.

ALLY            Before you came about.

MO             Must be proper gone off then.

ALLY            It's vintage.

MO             You didn't.

ALLY            Undefeated champion.

MO             It's your liver, no a fuckin competition.

ALLY            My liver's peachy.

MO             You don't even know where your liver is.

ALLY            (*singing*) Champion-eh, champion-eh, oh-way-oh-way-oh-way.

MO             Pisshead. Gonnae shut up and get that down you.

*Ally stops waving his arms like he's at a match, and looks at the burger.*

ALLY            D'you remember Dad used to get us these at the game?  
Used to get the pair of us a burger at the match when we were wee.  
Remember standin there with you an him and it was fuckin freezin  
but we were keepin our hands warm on the burgers. I remember  
you being like, "Comin to give me your gherkin," and I gave it you  
cos I didn't like it anyway, but I licked it first and stuff, and you still  
ate it.

MO             Probably gave me the clap.

ALLY            You remember.

MO             Fuck off. As if I remember a pickle.

ALLY            Dad was there. I ken his face when Larsson got sent off that time.

He was givin it all, did you see that son, that's the fuckin bee's knees, and he was a bit pished and everything, I mean, but just friendly though, and you and I were there, and he was holdin our hands and – he was that fuckin proud; his wee yins at the game.

MO He was holdin our hands.

ALLY Not in a gay way or anything –

MO An Larsson got sent off.

ALLY Aye. You remember.

MO You're makin the whole thing up. Larsson didn't play for Hoops til 1997. Unless you were on about holding hands with Dad when you were twelve.

ALLY Away.

MO 1997. Look it up.

ALLY Alright maybe it wasnae Larsson. It was somebody. Doesn't matter who it was.

MO Aye, and maybe he bought us they burgers at the Ritz. It never happened. Dad never bought us burgers at a match cuz he spent all the money at the pub before we got there. The only time I remember us bein that fuckin cold is the walk home the time he went the full cabuna and spent the ticket money.

*Ally throws his burger on the floor. Its constituent parts bounce across the carpet.*

ALLY You're a fuckin downer you are.

MO I just – I don't remember him the way you do.

ALLY Then you're no tryin. It's only been a fuckin month since he died.  
Get your thinkin cap on.

MO Naw. Naw. It's no like I've forgotten. They weren't there to forget.  
Just never had they memories in the first place.  
You were the one looked out for me when I was wee. You were the  
one who took me for a Maccy D's after.

ALLY Bullshit. He was there all the fuckin time. What about yon time we  
were mascots.

MO You were a mascot.

ALLY Yeah only cuz you were too much of a twat.

MO I was three.

ALLY An I got picked out and I got to go on the pitch with Donaldson.

MO Yeah an after you got dead happy and said you were gonnae be a  
footballer, even though you couldn't kick for shit.

ALLY I'll kick your fuckin face in.

MO With what, your gammy leg?  
You were dead excited, and you ken what Dad said?  
Fuck all. Mum had to come and pick us up because he was away  
getting plastered.

ALLY Bought me the new shirt though didn't he. That's how he said he  
was proud. No son of his was goin on the pitch in last year's kit.  
Bought me the new shirt.

MO Bought it down the Barras. Fuckin Paddy's Market.

ALLY Fuck off. They'd no stock a Teddys shirt. *Paddy's* ya dickhead.  
Anyway. It was the real deal. It was. I smelt it. Smelt like JJB Sports.

*A pause.*

That's when I knew but. Knew I was gonnae be on the team.

MO That's turned out really well.

ALLY Fuck off.

MO Must've missed you on Sportsound last night.

ALLY Don't have to be on the pitch to be on the team. Gonnae make myself useful.

MO How?

ALLY It's fate but. Ally McCoist. Me. We've got the same name. Destined for somethin big. Dad knew when he named me. I know he did.

MO Away.

ALLY Nah nah – knew how you were gonnae turn out as well. Mo Johnston. Sleepin with the Tims. Saw you comin a fuckin mile off.

MO Dad's a drunk, no a prophet.

ALLY Knew all about you pal.

MO If he's that fuckin psychic, how come he's dead.

*Pause. Ally flinches away.*

ALLY Aye well. I'm gonnae do him proud. Get myself on the team.

*He looks at the burger all over the floor then at Mo.*

Comin to pick that up. Got a gammy leg, don't I.

MO Ally's no the same after.



The leg bein broken, he can't go very far. I'm no even sure he'd try if he could, but. Just sort of sits there, pissed off his face, shouts at anything that moves - me, the football, the tv. Dead angry but, all the time, but like he doesn't know what to do with it. Like a missile an no target.

Goes on like that for a while, an I think mebbe things'll change when it's better, when his leg's oot the cast it'll be like it was again. It's no. He just goes on mopin. I start to wonder what 'like it was' even means. Mebbe this is just how things are now, so far as we've got a normal to go by, post Dad, post Mum, post-Shiv. I'm still seein her. We're just no talkin about it. Think mebbe that's why Ally's sulkin his socks aff. Sulks for Scotland when he wants to.

So here's me, I think mebbe I'll try and make things right. Kill two birds- get him out the house an stop bein a fuckin hermit, an while we're at it I'll try an make things right between the two of them. No nudity this time but. No me fiddlin with my zip while Ally has a tizzy. Just the three of us, get some drinks in, show Ally she's alright, show her Ally's okay tae once you get him aff the Orange walk. We'll all be right pals, eh? Eh?  
Worst mistake of my natural born life.

*Fade.*

*A divey bar.*

ALLY            Tim. That's a gye funny name by the way. Fuckin hilarious. You bein... you know -

*Mo cuts in.*

MO                If I was gonnae put a finger on the moment things went up shit creek, it's probably when we walk in the door. Shiv's there. Great. An eh - so's her big brother.  
On the bright side - him bein called Tim. At least Ally doesn' have to remember any names.

I don't really blame Shiv, right. I mean, you go roun your man's house an think mebbe his brother's gonnae stab you in the chuff, you bring back-up next time. No that she doesn trust me – she'd no be here otherwise – but she doesn't trust Ally further than she can fling him. So she brings the brother along.  
Right. So just me, Shiv, the Orange Walk and the Catholic bodyguard.  
World's shittest double date. Ever.

ALLY I'll get a round in.

MO You've already got one.

ALLY New one.

MO Ally's been on the lash since before we got here. Buildin himself up to seein Shiv again probably. But I'll no fight him on it. Keep it friendly for now, let him get a bit friendly drunk.  
Never happened before, mind, but I live in hope, right.  
It's all fine, an then Tim says he'll up an go with Ally. Help him get the round in. Ally's about to go apoplectic. I'll have to get between them in a tic - but he then he just shrugs an goes.

ALLY See I'm no thick right.  
Mo thinks I am but ahm no. Know which side my bread's buttered.  
Got a plan. Fuckin genius.

MO So they're away, an now it's just me an Shiv at the table thegether. It's this kind of awkward thing where we're both... neither of us really knows what to say so we're givin it this awkward gurny smile the both of us, goin, oh god please god say somethin, anythin, tell me what you had for lunch for fucksake,  
only neither of us knows what to say, because Christ is this the most awkward family meeting anyone's ever had.  
So we're just sittin there like lemons. It's late afternoon, an the sun comes in the window of the pub.

The light lands across Shiv's face, through her hair like the Midas touch, eh. Absolute belter, like a vision... so I lean in and I kiss her. This kiss, it's like nothing I've ever had before.

I mean, I've kissed loads of girls. I've kissed Shiv even. But this is – it's somethin else. It just ...is. No complicated. I'm no even tryin to get in her pants or anythin. She laughs in my mouth a bit. I think mebbe we're good again. Think we're sorted. Then like that it's over an we break apart, and I look over at the bar to see if Ally's clocked us

– and that's when I see it.

ALLY

See, I'd know his face anywhere.

The second me and Mo get in the bar, it's only a matter of time.

Lions circling round a deer.

It's him. I know this cunt's face. Thinks he can shake my hand cool as fuck, alright man how's it goin, but I know him, see right through the big smile he's flashin.

He's all this smile that's goin, 'alright, come on then, big man, show me what you've got', an I'll match him smile for smile right, because I'm James fucking Bond, and I know I'm playing poker with the criminal mastermind, but I can't shoot him because eh, diplomacy, eh. Fucking diplomacy.

I'll no cause a scene in front of Mo an his bit of stuff. Love's obviously turned his head saft, because how can he no have seen? Otherwise he'd be with me but, so I'll do it for both of us.

I'm gonnae have him.

I give it mebbe twenty minutes an then I say I'm goin to the bar.

Sure as shit he's up with me, I'll come an gee you a haun.

I fuckin bet you will, pal.

He says he's comin to help but we both know it's judgement day.

He'll come like a man an face what he's gettin.

We get to the bar, go through the formalities right, fair trial eh, an I say to him, is it you? Don need to say more than that, do I. I can see he knows me. We both know what I'm talkin about. All I need's him to say aye it is, man up and admit it so I'm sure what we both already know.

And I go, is it you, and he looks right at me, calm as you like, and he goes...

*Ally looks to Mo for an impression. Mo won't co-operate.*

Mo: Ally...

ALLY Fine. He goes, aye, big man it's me. What are you gonnae do about it?

An that's a good question right. I've been plannin this for a while. What *am* I gonnae do about it?  
So I figure I'll start with this: I punch him straight in the teeth.

MO An miss.

It's just as well Ally's already had a few rounds in him, because I turn round, and he's just slung a fist at Tim.  
Tim's a big guy, big target, but Ally's pished and he goes well wide of him, nearly falls flat on his face, but he catches it and the next thing, he's up an screamin,  
got his hands all up on Tim's shoulders, shakin him, goin, it was you, it was you.

Ally. *Ally*. What the fuck are you playin at?

ALLY It was him.

MO What was him?

ALLY He knows.

MO Gonnae settle down.

ALLY Don't tell me to fuckin settle. Mo.

You know who that is? Who that really is?

Looks so innocent like butter wouldn melt but it's him. You're not seein it because you're so hung up on this lassie that he's got you fooled. Pulled the wool right down an you're that fuckin blind.  
Turn roun an look.

MO           What the fuck am I lookin at?

ALLY         It's him.  
              He's the cunt that pushed Dad under a bus.  
              I'm gonnae fuckin have him now.

*Pause.*

MO           I don't know what I thought Ally knew about what happened. But  
              apparently I was wrong.  
              Really fucking wrong.  
              Tim goes back to the table. Shiv puts on her coat to go. I'm seeing  
              all this out of the corner of my eye because -  
              Ally. Put the – put the fuckin knife down. Give it.

ALLY         Move.

MO           No.

ALLY         It was him.

MO           No.

ALLY         I'd know his face anywhere.

MO           It wasn't him.

ALLY         You're a fuckin Judas. Judas I love Catholics Escariot. Get out my  
              way.

MO           You know my face too yeah?

ALLY         Fuck off.

MO           Yeah. You remember my face. You ken what happened.

ALLY         Yeah. Of course I fuckin do. There were two of them.

MO Kids. Two kids.

ALLY Nah. Nah. It was him and his mate. Big. Big guys.

MO That's what you told the polis.

ALLY It's what happened.

MO No. It's not.

ALLY Fuck off. Fuck off Mo Johnstone.

MO They were kids. And Dad was startin a fight.

ALLY He was finishin what they started.

MO He was pickin a fight with a twelve year old. He was drunk and he was gonnae kick in a kid for wearin a hoops shirt.

ALLY Nah. Nah he wouldn't -

MO He was gonnae kick in a fuckin wean.

ALLY He'd never -

MO He would. He did. He kicked the shit out of us.

ALLY That was different.

MO So I got there first an I pushed him. You knew. You lied to the polis.

ALLY I never. Told them what I saw.

MO Mebbe you told it so many times you forgot. It was me Ally. It was always me.

ALLY Fuck off.

MO           You saw.

ALLY         Nah. Nah. You're – you're only sayin it to get him out. You... Got to be really fuckin desperate for a shag, you.

MO           He's reachin a bit, but he's no that far off. Because – it wasn't just the kids was it. I'm no the hero here. Saw the window and took it didn't I.

But I'm not sorry. After Annie, after everythin – when I met Shiv, knew Dad wouldn't take it. Wouldn't go for his son an a Catholic girl. Opportunity knocks. Get him out the way. And I wasn't sorry. But this wasn't what I meant. Ally – Ally I was sorry about.

But I don't get the chance to say that. He's off an runnin down the street.

No fast right, no with the leg just out the cast, so I could catch him up, but I don't. I don't know what to do. We're a trek from home an I don't know where he'll go, but I jus staun there an watch him. See I can't leave – not while there's still a chance that Shiv might – and then Tim's whiskin her out the door. Gives me the nod as he goes. Kinof friendly about it like, but no really – he's distant, doesn want to get too close, you can see he's shuttin this thing down, burnin any bridges he can.

Shiv looks back over her shoulder and gives me the I'll call you later,

doesn't look like it if Tim's got anythin to do with it, but I can't barely look at her. Not even really seein anything - just Ally's face. I thought we were together on this. We both knew it was all a big story, didn't we. We're so fuckin smart we're got everybody cornered.

We both knew.

But he didn't.

An now I know right. That face - he's never known til now.

*Fade.*

ALLY

Fuck you lookin at pal? Fuck you lookin at? Nothin to see here. Just some cunt runnin through the park. Fuck off.

Dunno where I'm goin. Keep runnin. Leg hurts. Keep fuckin goin ya poof. Get there. Get there. Mo doesn mean it. Wasn't really him was it.

The whole thing's bullshit. Got to be.

Just wants to get his bit of stuff to spread her legs.

Cannae blame him really. She's got those over the shoulder boulder holders like naebdy's business.

He doesn't mean it.

Keep goin.

Fuckin stupid thing to do though. Fuckin basic tactical error, right because if he really wasn lyin right, if he'd really done it, I could have him now – just awa down the station an let the police know. Me, the bus driver, two witnesses right, two witnesses to say aye, it was Mo Gemmell killed his dad. Corrobated. Boom bang case closed end of story. Wham bam thank you mam.

But the bus driver doesn know what he saw. I know what I saw.

I know what I saw. It wasn't that.

It wasn't.

Keep runnin.

You think you're a hard man right. You wait until you're runnin on this fuckin leg. So the nearest place, the nearest place I get is Annie's. Mebbe Mum'll be there. Mebbe Mum'll be there. But she isn't. It's just Annie.

The fuckin bitch.

She gets my blood beilin right because – whose fault is this if it isn't hers? She's the one brought a Catholic into the house in the first place. Broke the family. Started the whole fuckin thing. Made Mo his Auntie's boy, only his auntie turns out to be a stupid cow, doesn't she?

Doesn't she?

She's lookin at me like she doesn't know why I'm here.

I'm gonnae fuckin show her.

Get her up the stairs, up the stairs into the bedroom she shares with her Paddy bit of stuff. She's game for that, get away from the



boy, so it's easy enough. Haven't got to force her. Don't have to drag her too much.

Mebbe I give her a cuff about the ear but it's just playful right just playful,

and we're up the stairs into the bedroom.

She goes to me

MO *(as Annie, but not a far reach from himself)* Alastair, what do you want?

ALLY I've always thought Mo was soft on her because really he wanted to jump her bones. We all know how much he lets his pecker be his guide, like fuckin Jiminy Cricket.

Me I always thought he wanted to dry hump her leg, and she's no bad lookin right. Well if she was that willin to jump into bed with the enemy, then she can fuckin make some room for me as well.

She's ruined my life. Ruined our family. The least she can do is give me a bit of compensation.

I'm tired of runnin. Mebbe let's lie down for a bit shall we eh, Annie.

You know you want to.

MO For a broken leg and a few sandwiches short of a picnic, Ally bolts for it like a bat out of hell.

I run the way he we went, an I'm faster than him, I always was even without the gammy leg, but he's gone. No answerin his phone. No nothing.

Then I get a phone from Annie.

I pick up, thinkin I'm about to get the bollocking of my life.

She's cryin. Screamin at me to get there. Ally's downstairs. Of course he is. What hurt wee boy doesn't run for his Mum's house? Only - he's been tryin it on with Annie, he tried something with her,

she won say more than that,

an she hit him.

He's stormed off in a sulk, but now he's downstairs, says he'll wait for his mum to come home, and she's too frightened to leave the bedroom, but her wee yin's down there. Won't call the police -

doesn't want to call the police on her family, doesn't want to grass him up.

This whole thing's about as funny as a baby's funeral but it still makes me smile a bit I suppose because I guess some things are genetic after all.

I say I'll be there in a sec.

ALLY I give Annie a bit of a break right, a wee breather, an I'm away doon the stairs. Sittin in the livin room, and the wee yin's there. Sittin on the couch in his hoops shirt. Comin to sit with me, I says to him. M'on then. He's no keen but, but I guess he changes his mind, next thing he's sittin with me on the couch. Talk to me about football eh. Who's your favourite.

MO The thing about it... Ally can sit there til the cows come home – Mum's no comin back. The night she left us. The night she left us I sat her down in the kitchen and told her what really happened. The funeral, lyin to the polis – an aye, mebbe I was a wee bit guilty right, even if I didn't want to be – I wanted to tell somebody what I'd really done, and I thought – who better than my mum. Dad's been beatin on her since day one, she'll be happy I've done her a favour. That's all I wanted right, is for me and her and Ally to get a normal life. When I tell her, when we're sittin in the kitchen with our tea, the words aren't out my mouth before I'm trying to push them back in. I killed our dad. They're no words you say as a comfort. No words you say over a cup of tea. Somehow naming it's worse than doing it. No way to make 'I killed our dad' sound like a benediction, like the blessing I've been thinking it was. Mum, she looks at me, and she doesn't say anything for a bit. I think mebbe I've misjudged. Mebbe she still loves him. But it's no that. I never wanted a killer for a son, she says. You're as bad as he is.

And then she left.

The truth is, she's no stayin with them. Never was.

Ally swears he seen her stuff round there but she never went. I phoned her the once and she hung up on me, but I know she's no there.

I only said it cuz it seemed like the thing to say. Blame her leavin on the Catholics. I knew Ally would go for it.

I wasn't wrong, was I?

ALLY

You like Neil Lennon eh. You like Neil Lennon.

I'll tell you what Neil Lennon is.

Neil Lennon's a ginger cunt.

You heard that word before? I bet your mum's never taught you that word. She's one as well, that's why. Doesn't want you callin it to her, eh.

But it's okay. It's alright you like Neil Lennon. Cannae help it.

See, if you'd been my wee brother I'd've given you a good teachin.

Telt you who's a cunt and who's no, but you've no had that, so you're no to know.

Mo's got no excuse. Did for him, didn't I. Telt him what to think.

Spoonfed him it didn't I. Did it for Dad when he couldn't right. Sash my faither wore.

See I'd've brought you up right. You'd be a fuckin legend, pal.

But here's the thing right, right, here's the thing – even if I did, even if I did it, even if I taught yis the good way, telt you about King Billy, kept you on the straight and narrow, teach you the sash – you still end up a cunt, don't you.

Still end up a twatbag in a hoops shirt.

Doesn't matter what I do. End up what you were born to.

And you were born a dirty Tim. Just like Mo. He was wan too. Sure his dad's a proddy but he never was. He was just tryin it on.

It's the name. Mo Johnston. You know who that is?

Nah. Too young to remember that. Well. Here's an education for ye.

He's another one like Neil Lennon. Remember the word I teltt you?

Say it.

See Mo was never gonnae turn out right. Bad seed from the start. But he's my brother so I look out for him. Look out for him all his life, and this is how he pays me back. You all end up the same. Dad always said to me; what's fir ye won't go by ye. Can't get by your destiny pal. You all turn out the same in the end. No me. Dad was proud of me. Ally McCoist. That's me.

MO Ally.

ALLY Hye here's trouble.

MO Let him go.

ALLY We're only playin.

MO Giz a rest. Come on. Get aff.

ALLY He knows we're only playing. Don't you? You know Ally's only playin. Come on. I can't hear you. Speak the fuck up.

MO Come away before his dad gets home.

ALLY He's no got a dad.

MO Brian's his dad.

ALLY Needs a real dad. A proddy dad like he should've had. Like his mum should've married. But you all come out in the end. The second Dad named you like that. Made you a dirty Irish bastard inside. I know you pal.

MO Aye cuz you've turned out gye well.

ALLY Fuck off.

MO Think it's destiny eh. Think this one's gonnae turn out like me eh.

ALLY You're all the same. Dad kne when he named you.

MO            You know what Dad named you for?

ALLY         A fuckin hero.  
Super Ally, Super Ally, oh-weh-oh-weh-oh-weh.

MO            Aye okay then. You ever think I'm no the only one Dad fucked over?  
You're born 1987 eh. September 1987.  
You know what Ally McCoist did 1987?

ALLY         Hat-trick in the Glasgow Cup. Beat the Tims hands-down.

MO            Aye.  
And then he punched some bastard in the face in East Kilbride.  
Got himself done for assault.

ALLY         On yersel Coisty. Bet it was a Paddy.

MO            McCoist gets himself done for assault.  
Gets himself done for assault two weeks before you're born. Up comes Dad, first wean, kickin and screamin, and here's Dad, aye, I ken what I'll name him after. A fuckin convict.

ALLY         At least I'm no a Catholic.

MO            That's all that matters.

ALLY         Aye. That's all that matters. That's the whole world. All there is.  
You're on my side or you're on theirs. Nae inbetween.

MO            I'm on your side Ally. It was Dad that wasnae. It was Dad bringin us down.  
I wanted us to get somethin better. Get us out.  
I'm on your side. You've got to believe I was.

ALLY         (*to the boy*) See, I taught my brother everythin he knows, but you know what he's taught me? Can't escape your destiny. Can't push it

under a bus. Yis are what you're born, right. You don get to make yourself a new life.

I'm the boy my da made me. I'm on the team. We are the Billy Boys. An if Dad meant me to punch some cunt in the teeth, Coisty through and through right, that's what you said, if I'm gonnae punch some fucker in the teeth – then eh - it's gonnae be you.

*Ally swings his fist back, thinks twice about it, then goes for Mo, pushes him hard against the wall.*

MO It's like I said. I'm his weak spot. Gives it big licks but when it's balls on the line, he can't find it in him to give me a kickin in, won't hit me, right, just slams me up against the wall - hard enough I black out for a sec.

Come to with the wee yin poking me in the face, askin am I dead Maurice, am I dead.

I say ah'm no, an he about jumps oot his skin. Starts screamin blue bloody murder. Dead quiet the whole time Ally had his arm about his neck right, but he's screamin the fuckin house down now. Kids, right.

I'm no dead I tell him, giz a rest. I'm no dead, but Ally's gone. Left the job no even half finished. I'm his weak spot.

Just then Annie's decided that he's no hers though, she's no got a weak spot with Alastair anymore, an she's called the polis. Good on her I suppose.

She says to stick around, mebbe they'll check me for concussion, give a statement, but I can't. Me an Ally grass each other up the police, tit for tat? Nah. Don't think so.

I make sure she's alright an everythin, but nah. I'm off.

Went tae ask her if she saw where he ran tae, but I think I already ken.

I get there, back at the bus stop, London Road.

He's standin at the stop, right on the kerb like he's waitin for the fuckin bus. There's a 66 stopped there right, and the driver's all, are ye gettin on or no. pal. Ally just looks at him.

ALLY Do I fuckin look like I'm gettin on. Fuck off ya bawbag.

MO The bus driver's lookin at him now lik mebbe he needs to call somedy for this guy. Ambulance. Polis mebbe.

MO Mebbe if you were sat down.

ALLY Don need to sit down. Don you fuckin tell me to sit down pal.

MO Alright. Alright.

ALLY *(to the bus)* Go on. Fuck off.

MO Bus driver's weighed it up now – he's no gettin in hip deep in whatever this is, and he's off. Just us.

ALLY How did yis do it?

MO You saw.

ALLY Nah. Nah. I didn't. If yis are so sure ye did it. Tell me how.

MO Pushed him. It's no rocket science.

ALLY Well I'm a fuckin stupid cunt obviously. Or you're a fuckin ninja.

MO You knew it wasnae they two boys.

ALLY Could've been.

MO They were barely even born.

ALLY Neither are you.

MO I'm nearly eighteen.

ALLY Still ma wee brother.

MO That's why you told the polis what you did.

ALLY Nah. I told the polis because I thought it was what happened. I don't. I don't. It still is what happened. I'm seein it now. Them two givin him the heave ho into the road.

MO What you wanted to see.

ALLY Don't you fuckin – I didn't want to see my dad dead.

MO I did.

ALLY It was an accident though.  
Tell us it was an accident.

Go on then.

MO Eh?

ALLY Come on.  
If you're such a fuckin hard man – comin to give it another go.  
Finish the fuckin job. I'll just staun here an you push us in front of a car.  
Bus mebbe. Nah. Nah. Make it a big fuckin truck. An Eddie Stobart.  
Make it a big fuckin Eddie Stobart.  
Blaze of glory. Come on.  
Come on.  
Fuckin dae it.

MO Come awa. Get aff.

ALLY Come the fuck on.

MO No. Don't be stupit.

ALLY Alright. Alright okay.  
But tell you what. You let this go. You let me go now. I'm givin you this one fuckin shot. You let me go, an I promise you right, I



absolutely fuckin promise you pal, I'll go back an finish what Dad started.

You think I'm stupid right. You think I'm a fuckin dipshit.

I'm no. I heard yis.

First time you told Mum you met this Catholic girl,

oh Mum there's this girl, think I'm in love eh,

an Dad overheard an you never meant him to.

I heard. He's roarin to burst a gasket – no fuckin wonder.

You think I didn't hear. Sayin he's have yis if he catches you at it.

Even catches a sniff of her. He'd beat the everlivin shit out of you – right after he gashed her first. Think I didn't know?

Then suddenly Dad's dead right an you've got this easy out.

Well you've had that pal.

I'll pick it up where he left off. I heard the whole fuckin thing. An

I'm on his side. I thought you'd left it. Thought you'd left it alone

out of respect for him. Found this fuckin *Sarah* bird instead. An

then it turns out it's her. I should've fuckin known. You've had that pal.

You ever bring her round the house again. You even fuckin try. I'll give it to her. Give her what she fuckin deserves. Let her scream for days right, scream like the slut she is - an then I'll kill her.

MO                    Fuck off. You wouldn't.

ALLY                Oh aye. Away an ask Annie what I wouldn do.

MO                    Nah. You talk a big game, but... you're no Dad, Ally. You can do what you want now. You don't have to be like this.

ALLY                What the fuck's this?

News flash right. I'm no a kept man. You're givin it as if I'm fuckin Free Willy. Can't set me off into the fuckin wild, right, cuz I don't want to be free. I already am free.

You think you kill off Dad and I run off an shag the first Irish girl I see, because that's what you did. That's what'll make me happy eh?

Nah.

Mo, ah do what Dad says cuz he was *right*. An nothin'll make me happier than seein your Tim bitch get what's comin to her. You ken me?

So come on then. Mo Johnston the wee hard man. Come on.

*Mo hesitates.*

I said *come on*.

MO

It's like I said before –

Ally's been drinkin all day. Drinkin before the pub. Drinkin durin the pub.

An he's so angry with me now right, he's fuckin spittin nails, an jumpin up an down on the kerb like he's fuckin possessed – an I see it before he does.

See his balance go. His heel jus misses the kerb. I see it. See him totter a bit an I go to catch him.

He's bigger than me. Built like a brick shithouse, an I'm a skelf to him, so I go to catch him, an I fumble it a bit.

We both end up sprawlin out into the middle of the road.

I can feel his breath on my ear, special brew and spit and hate, an I look up – here's this pale blue Jag comin right at us.

Private license plates two feet from my face.

Driver's got no time.

The brakes are like fuckin banshees.

An that's all I've got.

*A light change.*

I wake up in the hospital a couple days later.

Annie's there. She's got this peely wally face on.

Maurice, she says. Mo.

Doctor says to wait. Give it a few days.

*Come on though Doc eh, don't keep us in suspense.*

He tells her it might be wise, it might be wise to wait until the mother's here.

*Eh, my mum's comin?*

But nah. Annie says no. No, I've phoned her. She won't be here. Of course she won't. Got no family now. Dad's gone. Ally's gone. And who will he be staying with, pipes up this wee gumshee nurse in the corner, social worker mebbe. He'll need somewhere to stay with the trauma of this accident – and Annie says of course I'll stay with her. An they say yes, I'm eighteen, an I can go where I want, an will I stay with Annie?  
*Aye. Okay.*  
An then I'm gone again.

I don't remember much of the hospital. Fragments right. Kin of blurry white an all the bustle – major concussion, fractured hip bone, fractured left patella.  
*Here, Doc, what the fuck's a patella?*  
Kneecap. Yon busted kneecap. No professional football career for me then eh. Shame. Put the final clappers on anythin Dad wanted. Good.  
But I don't remember much, except – Shiv shows up. I don't know when. I'm high as a kite on whatever they've given me, an she shows up, her hair's danglin over my face she kisses my forehead like a benediction.  
Turns out with Ally out the picture, Tim doesn't mind so much. Drives her over to the hospital. Lets her look after me. Eh gee boy does she look after me.

This is all two years gone now right, but we're back at the Vic again.  
Me an Shiv – we've got a wean of our own on the way. It's eh – a bit of a surprise, but we've made it work. Moved out of Annie's a few months back. Got our own flat, an it's nowhere near Ibrox, nowhere near Parkheid either. An when this wean comes right, I'm gonnae raise him right. Gonnae raise him so's he can pick his own side. Or mebbe he'll no pick a side at all, an that's okay too. Glasgow's no just Rangers and Celtic now is it. He'll be fine.

Or she if it's a girl obviously. I'm fine with a girl too.

I still go by the old bus stop sometimes.

I'd put down flowers, but Ally wouldnae want that. Wouldnae want somethin that girly to mark the place where...

They said after that the concussion might've knocked me silly a bit, but I remember. I remember the whole thing.

I told my story when they asked. It was an accident. I was tryin to catch him.

Blurry on the finer details obviously. Concussion.

The Jag driver – well, he says he saw one of us grab hold of the other one. Pull them into the road. Saw Ally grabbing for me when he fell, eh.

'Aye. That sounds about right. Alright son. You just focus on gettin better. We'll no take up any more of your time.'

So just us now then.

Make a go of it. Me, Shiv, and the wee one.

Aye. That sounds about right. That sounds about right.

**PhD Full-Length Plays: Fox's Children**  
**Play III of III**

**Fox's Children**

By Morven Hamilton

*As to our own particulars, we utterly deny all outward wars and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever. This is our testimony to the whole world.*

- George Fox, founder of The Religious Society of Friends (Quakerism)

***Dramatis Personae***

*Arthur Rowntree*

*Ellen Rowntree*

*James Shepherd*

*Wilcox*

*Dewbury*

*Joan*

*Pastor Michael*

*Braithwaite*

*Robert Bolton*

*William Bolton*

*Lies Verhoeven*

*Bram Verhoeven*

*Pepler*

*Midgley*

**Note:**

*This play was originally written for and staged at Bootham School (an independent Quaker boarding school) under the title *A Subtle Resistance: Scraps from a Bootham Diary in the Great War*. The play was performed by young people aged 11 to 17, both at the school and in York's city centre, in April, June and September 2013, as a part of York Theatre Royal and Pilot Theatre's *Blood and Chocolate* project. It was staged by pupils of Bootham before the entire school on September 26<sup>th</sup> 2013.*

*The play is based primarily on the autobiographies and diaries of Ellen and Arthur Rowntree. In two scenes, their words are used directly, and those points are marked in the footnotes. Consultation with former Bootham students (known as Old Scholars) and study of the school's extensive archive provided the rest of the play's material. None of the people who feature in this play were still alive at the time of writing, but I hope to have been faithful to what I learned about them.*

*The play is currently a part of negotiations with HistoryWorks, BBC Radio 4, and BBC Radio Yorkshire.*

*In its various first performances, the play began and ended with a slideshow of pictures of Bootham School and its former pupils, accompanied by Edward Elgar's Cello Concerto in E Minor, op.85.*

*November 1915. Alone at his desk, Arthur Rowntree hears a knock at the door. His secretary, JOAN, enters, hesitantly.*

JOAN           Headmaster? I don't want to disturb you, sir, I'm sorry, but there's a gentleman at the door – a police constable.

ARTHUR       What does he want?

JOAN           He didn't say. It seemed quite important but – I didn't want to nosy around in your business. Shall I go back and -- ?

ARTHUR       No, no, that's alright. Send him in.

*She leaves. Enter SHEPHERD, of the York City Police Force. He is not shy about picking up and examining things in Arthur's office while he speaks.*

SHEPHERD   Evening, sir. Constable James Shepherd, sir.

ARTHUR       Arthur Rowntree. How can I assist you?

SHEPHERD   Rowntree, sir.

ARTHUR       You were expecting someone else?

SHEPHERD   No, sir. Only, that's the family name, isn't it, sir. Dozens of Rowntrees in this city. My old dad worked for Joseph Rowntree over at the chocolate factory, up til not so long ago. You know him?

ARTHUR       Joseph is my cousin.

SHEPHERD   You know where it comes from, I assume? 'Rowntree'?

ARTHUR       I'm told it's Medieval English. Much like your own, I expect.

SHEPHERD Not anything else then. Not anything Germanic, say.

ARTHUR I beg your pardon?

SHEPHERD Sorry, sir. Got to check, sir. We take it seriously, you know. The threat.

ARTHUR I'm afraid I don't follow.

SHEPHERD The enemy within, you know. Got to keep an eye out for spies inside our ranks.

ARTHUR I see. Well, I can assure you, if I saw any, I would inform you immediately.

SHEPHERD Well, that's just it, sir, isn't it? We had reports. Not the first neither. Reports about you from ... anonymous sources, shall we say.

ARTHUR Constable, we make short shrift of nameless tittle-tattling at this school. I'd assume York City Police Force could do the same.

SHEPHERD They've got a right to their privacy sir. In the face of the Germanic threat, you know. Got a right to fear for themselves, don't they, sir?

ARTHUR Not from me.

SHEPHERD We don't know that for sure now, do we.

ARTHUR That's enough. You will not come into my school and level baseless accusations at me, *sir*. I'll thank you to take your leave now.



SHEPHERD Mr Rowntree, I'm representing His Majesty's own Defence of the Realm Act. You'd do well to take these charges seriously.

ARTHUR What are these charges? On what grounds?

SHEPHERD You're a Quaker, sir.

ARTHUR I don't see what that has to do with this.

SHEPHERD We have to verify why you're not fighting.

ARTHUR I'm 57 years old, Constable. What do you expect?

SHEPHERD Did you want to fight?

ARTHUR It's something of a moot point.

SHEPHERD Do you want to help your country or not?

ARTHUR I notice *you're* not fighting.

SHEPHERD I'm protecting the country at home, sir. What are *you* doing?

ARTHUR Teaching its children.

SHEPHERD Teaching them *what*.

ARTHUR Not to be fools, for one.

SHEPHERD What are you implying?

ARTHUR I couldn't possibly fight for my country. That doesn't make me an infiltrator.

SHEPHERD So maybe you were too old to fight, so you thought you'd help your country out some other way, sir. Give them some information, maybe, sir.

ARTHUR My country is, and has always been, England.

SHEPHERD Then why did your neighbours report seeing you on the roof, giving out signals to German planes?

ARTHUR I'm sorry?

SHEPHERD Were you on the roof of the school?

ARTHUR Frequently. We all are.

SHEPHERD Who else is up there?

ARTHUR Don't be absurd. We have a sunlight gauge. It measures the school's light exposure.

SHEPHERD We're in England. You don't need to be on the roof to know it's probably raining. Why do you need to know more than everyone else?

ARTHUR It's a scientific measurement. We're a school.

SHEPHERD So you say.

ARTHUR What are you implying?

SHEPHERD We've also had reports of someone unfamiliar looking at maps of the city, seen through a window on the main street.

ARTHUR      Who's spying on whom here?

SHEPHERD    Answer the question.

ARTHUR      I don't see that there was one. I don't have to respond to fairy stories.

SHEPHERD    Are you harbouring spies?

ARTHUR      We have a new maths teacher, if that's what you mean.

SHEPHERD    And he likes maps?

ARTHUR      He received his degree from Sheffield in July.

SHEPHERD    Young man, is he?

It's all very convenient, sir, if you don't mind my saying. All very convenient that so many men are loitering here and refusing to fight.

ARTHUR      Loitering. Do you propose that the children teach themselves?

SHEPHERD    I would feel easier about our nation's children being taught by *women* than by possible spies.

*A pause.*

ARTHUR      Is that all you have to say, Constable? Do you have leave to do anything further here?

SHEPHERD    Just wanted a quick word, is all. Checking out the situation, you know. Got to be safe.

ARTHUR      Then until such time as you can say more than that we are  
                 'possible' spies, I'll bid you goodnight.

*A pause, while the two silently square up to each other.*

SHEPHERD   Careful how you go, Mr Rowntree. I won't be having nobody  
                 shirking their duty in my city.

*Shepherd leaves. A moment's pause while Arthur collects himself, and then another  
knock. Joan enters.*

ARTHUR      For God's sake, what now?

JOAN          Your wife to see you sir.

ARTHUR      Yes. Of course. My apologies. Send her in.

*Joan exits. Enter Ellen.*

ELLEN        You mustn't snap at the staff, Arthur, they're doing their best.

ARTHUR      And what about Shepherd? Is he doing his best?

ELLEN        I imagine. Under the circumstances. We do what we can with what  
                 we're given.

ARTHUR      I know we aren't fighting, but you'd think they could see their way  
                 to recognising we're on their side.

ELLEN        Are we?

ARTHUR      Not you as well. I'm not a German, Ellen.

ELLEN            I wasn't sure we ought to take a side at all. A German soldier isn't so very different from an English one. They're all God's creation.

ARTHUR          Don't let them hear you say that outside. They'll have you up in stocks before you know it.

*Pause.*

ELLEN            You know – you've never said. If it came to it, if you'd been a younger man - would you have fought?

ARTHUR          I don't see that it matters.

ELLEN            But if you had the choice?

ARTHUR          Ellen, I didn't humour Shepherd and his fairy stories. I'm not indulging you either. I'm going to supper.

*Arthur exits furiously.*

*Ellen sits down at Arthur's desk. She picks up a pen. The room has shifted forward in time, to an unspecified point.*

ELLEN            The accusations against my husband were utterly groundless, of course, and nothing more was to come of them. Still, it left a rather bitter taste in the mouth. The war was a trial in many respects, and I will not pretend that ours was the worst. Nevertheless, for us, there was a continual feeling that we were never quite enough. To our compatriots, we were doing rather less than our civic duty, and to ourselves, to our sense as Quakers – well, that was quite a different matter.

*Time shifts again; Ellen is now in the back pitches of the school, 1915, joined by Wilcox and Dewbury, who are digging the earth over for the potatoes.*

*WILCOX picks out a bad potato from the ground.*

WILCOX      Another rotten one, Miss.

ELLEN        Ellen, Wilcox. Another rotten one, *Ellen*. Do you know why that is?

WILCOX      Because God wanted us to play cricket on this field, Miss. Miss Ellen.

DEWBURY    It's because of the cold. They ruin underground when it's cold.

WILCOX      Look out, Dewbury. Enemy grenade incoming.

*He lobs the rotten potato at Dewbury.*

ELLEN        And what would you know about grenades?

WILCOX      Sod all. Not allowed to fight, am I?

*Dewbury elbows Wilcox, hard.*

ELLEN        Wilcox, the day the British army takes on a fifteen year old...

WILCOX      Not really about me being fifteen though, is it it, Miss. I'm from a Quaker School. I'm not meant to fight, even if I was ages to.

ELLEN        (*deflecting*) Wilcox, as I see it, your being 'ages to' isn't until 1917, and if the war had any likelihood of going on that long, we could

discuss this further then. In the meantime, we'll have a sight fewer projectile potatoes, if you please.

WILCOX        They're rotten. What else are we meant to do with them?

ELLEN         We'll put them on the compost pile and use them to replant the field for the next season.

WILCOX        So we're using bad potatoes to mush up the field so we can grow more bad potatoes.

ELLEN         If that's what it takes to help our country.

WILCOX        Why not just let us learn how to fire a gun?

ELLEN         Wilcox, if you'd rather engage in some other pursuit in your spare time, by all means, be my guest. No-one's forcing you to plant the back field.

WILCOX        No-one's letting us be useful either. No-one ever killed a German with a rotten potato, Miss.

ELLEN         That's *enough*.

*Wilcox sulkily resumes potato digging. Dewbury throws him a look. An awkward silence.*

DEWBURY      What do you do in your spare time, Miss?

ELLEN         Ellen.

DEWBURY      Ellen. What do you do?

ELLEN I'm sorry?

DEWBURY When you're not with us, I mean.

ELLEN I find I have very few moments *not* spent with you boys.

DEWBURY But you must have some things you like to do. The headmaster talks so much about us having hobbies.

ELLEN I suppose. Arthur says gardening is God's hobby – 'God almighty first planted a garden.' It pleases him that we work in his image. So I suppose -- I find it quite relaxing, in any case.

WILCOX You would have to with these crops.

DEWBURY But... aside from gardening, Miss.

ELLEN I suppose no-one's ever really asked me what I like and don't like. I quite like writing, sometimes.

WILCOX Writing what?

ELLEN Oh, you know. My own idlings, mostly.

DEWBURY Could we hear some?

ELLEN No – no, I don't think that would be appropriate.

DEWBURY Please, Miss.

WILCOX What do you care, Dewbury?

DEWBURY I don't. I just --



ELLEN            Thankyou, Wilcox, I'm quite capable of taking care of myself.

DEWBURY        My brother used to write to me sometimes.

ELLEN            I remember your brother. He was a very talented boy.

WILCOX          Not like Dewbury then.

*Ellen gives Wilcox a look; he resumes digging.*

ELLEN            He joined the Friends' Ambulance Unit.

DEWBURY        Yes, Miss.

ELLEN            And how is he finding it?

DEWBURY        I don't think he found it --

                    His unit were gassed, Miss.

                    Trying to move their ambulance out of a ditch.

*Dewbury says nothing for a while. He awkwardly picks at the potato field with his trowel.*

DEWBURY        But I quite liked getting his letters though, Miss. Made me feel like he was close by. He had a gift for words, that's what the English masters always said. I used to read them out for Mother whenever the post came.

ELLEN            And did you write back?

DEWBURY No, Miss. My letters aren't very good. Mother said it was God's plan, that Edward had the writing talent and I act them out for her. She thought it was meant to be this way.  
I think I could have read the letters just as well if they'd said he was coming back.

ELLEN And you resent your mother for saying it was God's plan.

DEWBURY Wouldn't you?

ELLEN Sometimes I admire the headmaster's faith.

DEWBURY She wants me to be an actor. My mother, I mean.

ELLEN Is that what you want?

DEWBURY I want the world to need actors, Miss. Doesn't really seem useful now.

I think Edward would have liked it. Maybe I could have read something of his.

ELLEN It sounds like perhaps you could judge mine for me then.

*She takes a folded piece of paper from the back of her apron.*

ELLEN Would you do me the honour?

*DEWBURY takes the letter and unfolds it. WILCOX leans on his trowel.*

DEWBURY 'The most...'. 'The most awful war. I remember the sun, drawing a great purple cloud across his face, as if he could no more bear to look on such a world, and the moon rose, drawing black veils of

cloud over herself, as if she too could not bear to shine upon an earth of battlefields.’<sup>199</sup>

ELLEN            There now. How does that sound?

WILCOX          It sounds as if the sun set, Miss. Same as any other day.

ELLEN            Wilcox –

WILCOX          I mean it, Miss. There’s no point pussyfooting around it. The sun doesn’t care none what we do. This is just the same as any other war. We get through it and the sun goes up and down and that’s just life.

ELLEN            Your classmate’s brother has died in this war. Show some respect.

WILCOX          Why? The school never showed him any. War’s just going to happen. It just is. We learn as much in History all the time. And if it’s going to happen, the school should teach us how to fight it.

ELLEN            We are not having military drill inside the grounds of this school.

WILCOX          Fine. Then we’ll all just lay down in a ditch and *die*.

ELLEN            That’s enough, that’s -- This school does not support the war, Wilcox. Not now, not ever.

WILCOX          Then why are we out here digging up potatoes on the sports field Miss? Isn’t this a war effort? You feed the nation, the nation puts a

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<sup>199</sup> ‘The most awful war... to shine upon an earth of battlefields’ - Ellen Rowntree’s writing, ‘Scraps from a Wartime Diary’ in the Bootham Annual, 1938, available from Bootham School’s archives.

gun in our hands and then everyone forgets that no-one taught us how to use it.

*WILCOX and ELLEN are almost squaring off here; the heat of the moment passes. ELLEN is dumbfounded for a moment. Silence. ARTHUR enters.*

ARTHUR      Alright boys, I think it's time you called it a day. I believe they're about to serve supper inside.

*The boys take their things and go, Wilcox sullen about it.*

ARTHUR      Good haul today?

ELLEN        Not particularly.

*Rowntree looks at the gatherings.*

ARTHUR      No. I see that. They've rotted. It's the cold snap that's done that, you know.

When you put so much care and nurture into the thing, for it to come out like that – it frustrates. Sometimes it almost feels as though they're doing it to vex you.

Ellen?

ELLEN        How did we want them to come out, Arthur?

*Arthur looks at the potato in his hands, back at her.*

ELLEN        The boys. How do we expect them to leave us? I thought that I understood but -- The line between supporting the nation and supporting the war ... Sometimes it seems like we're blurring it

more every day. Sometimes – I know this is keeping the war alive, and I *enjoy* it. What does that say about me?

ARTHUR      A potato never killed a man, Ellen.

ELLEN        Wilcox said the same not five minutes ago.

ARTHUR      Then he's a sensible boy.

ELLEN        I don't think that's the point he was making.  
It feels like something burning, Arthur; something burning in the walls. The boys are angry. They think we're holding them back.

ARTHUR      Good. Then I'm doing something right. If we can hold them back long enough, maybe by the time they slip between our fingers, this will be over.

ELLEN        And that's enough?

ARTHUR      It has to be. We have nothing else.

*Arthur leaves. Ellen takes the note back out of her pocket. The time has changed again.*

ELLEN        I will never know now, I think, whether Wilcox did or didn't learn how to fire a rifle. Against myself, I hope that he did. We tried as best we could to follow our old boys through their careers, but the war left that notion, like so much else, in utter ruins; young boys flung across the fields of Europe, and no way of knowing where they'd gone. We know Wilcox made it as far as Passchendaele, with the Northumbrian Howitzer Brigade, but our records stop there. There was no record of death, or of victory – just an end. An end to

the letters, and perhaps that meant he'd gone home, and had no need for correspondence anymore.

I often think that, even if he were alive, Wilcox would not have come back to us. Many others did. Their leave visits to the school kept us all cheerful through the war. Against my better instincts, against everything we taught them, in the most unnatural battle in history, it is difficult to resist the happiness of hearing that your boys are winning.

*May 2<sup>nd</sup> 1917, a basement under the school; the boys and staff are gathering during a zeppelin raid – the sound of bombs dropping above. The boys and Ellen are gathered around one of the old scholars, Braithwaite.*

ARTHUR        I'm terribly sorry, Pastor Michael. You come to stay with us for two weeks and find yourself in the only actual zeppelin raid we've had so far. I assure you it wasn't intentional.

PASTOR        Don't you find this -- a little unseemly, Rowntree?

ARTHUR        The zeppelins?

PASTOR        No, the boys. Letting that -- chap talk to them.

ARTHUR        Braithwaite was one of our finest scholars. He was Head Reeve. Captain of the school Fire Brigade.

PASTOR        Yes, but he's now in the – the *Wavy Navy*.

ARTHUR        You have a particular objection to the Royal Naval Reserve?

PASTOR        I do when it's put in front of Quaker boys as an adventure story.

ARTHUR I expect they need a little adventure right now.

PASTOR This isn't 'adventure' enough?

ARTHUR They're young boys and they're frightened. It's a distraction.

PASTOR It certainly is. It's a distraction from everything they've been taught.

ARTHUR The boys aren't as impressionable as all that.

PASTOR It's adventure on the high seas. Boats and guns and glory. They're exactly as impressionable as that. Moths to the military flame.

ARTHUR The man fought at Gallipoli. Half of his regiment were evacuated with dysentery. This isn't Treasure Island.  
What would you have me do? Go over there and remind them how we took a filthy beating from the Ottoman Empire?

PASTOR It's not my place to say.

ARTHUR Well, I'd welcome your advice.

PASTOR They shouldn't be allowed to come back.

ARTHUR I'm sorry?

PASTOR It's worked perfectly well at the chocolate factories. If they go to war, if they decide to fight, they're not to come back.

ARTHUR We find that of God in everyone. Not just in the people we agree with. How do I teach that to the students, and at the same time, excommunicate their fellows?

PASTOR It's in everyone's best interests.

ARTHUR This is their home. I won't deny them.

PASTOR Then you can't stop the boys from wanting to follow them. Wanting to emulate them. You're opening the floodgates and you don't seem to care.

ARTHUR I'm not encouraging them, Michael.

PASTOR You are. Every soldier that you bring into the school. Every announcement at morning meeting. Every letter from the front that you publish in the school magazine – all of it. In the guise of jolly stories, you invite the nation's propaganda to just -- wander the corridors.

ARTHUR They follow where God leads them.

PASTOR Where the school pushes them, you mean.

You're drawing a very subtle line here, Arthur. I don't think the boys understand. What is and isn't counted as peaceful assistance – you're practically inspiring them to fight. They farm the back pitches, fine. You turn classrooms into a naval hospital, fine. But you bring soldiers into the school and clap them on the back, and suddenly it starts to look like maybe even joining the army is an acceptable way to make peace.

ARTHUR They understand the difference.



PASTOR I'm starting to wonder if you do.

*Rowntree takes his leave and approaches Braithwaite, Ellen and the boys.*

BRAITH. I kept them going as long as I could, Arthur. Ran out of steam a bit towards the end, I'm afraid. They're keen, aren't they? You should ask the Pastor to take over; I'm sure he'll have something to tell them.

*Awkward silence.*

ARTHUR I'm afraid I missed the most part - what were you telling them?

BRAITH. You know, this and that. Actually - I heard the most amazing bit of news the other day -

ARTHUR Oh yes?

BRAITH. Did you know there's a Bootham trench?

ARTHUR I beg your pardon?

BRAITH. Out near Arras - I only heard by way of our unit's orders before I came back - there's fighting there now. Bootham trench. Who'd have thought.

ELLEN Who would have named it that?

BRAITH. I don't know - an old scholar out there I expect when they were digging the thing. Maybe it was one of us that used to dig potatoes with you in the back field, Ellen. God, I used to hate that. But what I

wouldn't give to be back there now. That was the real Bootham trench, eh?

PASTOR      Tell me again that you're not encouraging this.

*Silence between them. The sound of bomb dropping overhead. Everyone but Ellen exits. Time shift.*

ELLEN      Bootham trench is Bootham Cemetery now. Despite the name, no-one buried there seems to have come from our school, so we never did find out who it was. All I can say is that it brought the fighting closer to us in a way; gave it a name overseas that we felt we had to acknowledge as *ours* somehow.

Still, in a time of near-suffocating national duty, this was not enough for everyone. Whilst the Pastor raged at us for supporting the soldiers, the students' parents took a somewhat different view.

*Arthur's office, June 1917. Arthur seated. Robert Bolton standing, looking round the room.*

ARTHUR      Do sit down.

*Bolton half-refuses, rethinks, and sits.*

BOLTON      It's this room. Still puts me a bit on edge.

ARTHUR      You weren't one of mine.

BOLTON      No. I was 1890. This was Fryer's office.

ARTHUR Has it changed much?

BOLTON I wouldn't know. I was too busy having good sense whipped into me to look at the artwork.

ARTHUR Well, I'm not the man Fryer was.

BOLTON Rowntree, you don't have to tell me that.

*Beat.*

ARTHUR Well, your finances are all in order. All bills paid. We can close the book on that.

BOLTON Good. I'll take William back now then. No point in dragging it out.

ARTHUR I only urge you not to make rash decisions.

BOLTON You know times are tight. Boarding school, it's a luxury.

ARTHUR Where will you take him?

BOLTON We're sending him to Hull. A local school - I forget the name. Hardly matters, does it. It's Hull.

ARTHUR You know, if it's money you need, we can find some way - William's a bright boy. There are scholarships -

BOLTON No. No, I won't take charity.

ARTHUR It wouldn't be -

BOLTON (*sharper than is strictly necessary*) No.

Thankyou. But no.

He won't be there too much longer. Only a couple of years education left in him, eh.

ARTHUR But - who a man is - a couple of years makes all the difference.

BOLTON Then I suppose we'll just have to wait and see.

ARTHUR I wish you'd reconsider. William's done well here. He's a popular boy. Good marks. I'm told he thoroughly carries the school play.

BOLTON They can recast.

ARTHUR Well, of course, but that isn't - he'll be sorely missed. By the staff too, I don't doubt.

BOLTON Oh, I'm sure of that. I'm sure they're very attached.

ARTHUR William's a very able pupil.

BOLTON You know, when I sent my boy here, I sent him so that he could gain some distance from his mother; not gain a dozen more.

ARTHUR Beg pardon?

BOLTON He's always been a bit - namsy pamsy - and now this. Women teachers at Bootham.

ARTHUR We've had to make changes.

BOLTON It's a boys' boarding school.

ARTHUR I can assure you, there's nothing inappropriate going on -

BOLTON      You're housing a rabble of teenage boys. *Everything* is inappropriate.

ARTHUR      We're keeping a strict eye on the situation.

BOLTON      But these are *women*.

ARTHUR      So we've established.

BOLTON      Rowntree, how can a woman possibly teach a boy how to be a man? She has no idea herself.

ARTHUR      I believe there are certain things they can pass on.

BOLTON      This is nonsense. Talk about lions led by donkeys.

ARTHUR      There are certain traits we have in common.

BOLTON      Not the things of real value.

ARTHUR      The things of the highest value. Kindness. Understanding.

BOLTON      Very good, but I need my boy to have a backbone. I need him to be intelligent.

ARTHUR      Our staff are highly trained specialists.

BOLTON      Highly trained by women's standards.

ARTHUR      Highly trained by anybody's standards. His English master has a first from Cambridge.

BOLTON 'Master'. What's 'his' name?

ARTHUR They are all masters where the classroom is concerned.

BOLTON Yes, but what are they teaching in these classrooms? This 'school play'.

ARTHUR It's *The Tempest*. You have a better suggestion?

BOLTON They shouldn't be doing a play at all.

ARTHUR They shouldn't study Shakespeare. In English.

BOLTON It used to be, one studied with *books*. This dressing up and pretend – this is what you get when you put women in the classroom.

ARTHUR Actually, the play was my idea.

BOLTON Yours.

ARTHUR I thought it would be a welcome break.

BOLTON We're at war.

ARTHUR They aren't.

BOLTON They have to leave this school eventually. They'll get no welcome breaks in the trenches.

ARTHUR And if there are no trenches to go to?

BOLTON That's a pipe dream.

ARTHUR I know. I dream it constantly.

BOLTON The world doesn't need dreamers.

ARTHUR That's *exactly* what it needs. 'We are such stuff as dreams are made on,' Mr Bolton.

BOLTON Asquith?

ARTHUR The Tempest. I assume you studied it in a book.  
When this war is over – these boys are the ones who'll have to lead us out of it. Such stuff as dreams are made on, and they have no dreams. If all we teach them is war, and guns, and drills - if all we teach them is hate – how can we expect anything else? A generation of warmongers. How long will it be, do you think, before they start another one?

BOLTON So you mean to continue then. Coddling them with women. Letting them prance about like children while their country is at war.

ARTHUR They *are* children, Mr Bolton. I won't have it any other way.

BOLTON Then I won't have my son at this school.

*Beat. A knock at the door. Ellen enters with William Bolton, who looks slightly bedraggled.*

ELLEN I've had them put William's things in the coach.

ARTHUR This is it then. Four generations of your family here, and now -

BOLTON I'm as sorry as you are.

ELLEN            *(putting her hand on William's head)* Goodbye then, William. We'll miss you.

*She fixes his tie and jacket for him.*

BOLTON        You see? This is exactly...

ARTHUR        I'll see you to the coach.

*Bolton storms out, taking William with him. Arthur follows behind.*

*Time shift.*

ELLEN            The loss of William Bolton was one of many in the course of the war. Whether they went to fight or left for greener pastures, we felt the loss just as keenly. Each boy was a unique case, here to learn and to be learned. In the end, it didn't matter where they'd come from. We loved them all the same, whether they'd known Bootham their whole life, like the Boltons, or only for a small part of it, like Yannick Verhoeven.

*August 1917. Arthur enters a small sitting room, where Lies Verhoeven looks at him silently.*

ARTHUR        Mrs Verhoeven. I'm looking for your husband. Ton mari?

*Enter Bram Verhoeven.*

BRAM            Lies, don't be unkind.  
I am sorry. Lies understands more than she allows you to think.  
'Ton mari' is French. We are Flemish. Haar echtgenoot.



ARTHUR      She doesn't speak.

BRAM        No. She can listen well. Speech is harder.

ARTHUR      Can she write?

BRAM        (*guarded*) Some.

ARTHUR      We could help with that, you know. We *are* a school.

BRAM        We are old. We don't need to be educated.

ARTHUR      No.  
              Mr Verhoeven, are you happy here?

BRAM        Happy is a difficult word. This is not our country.

ARTHUR      Forgive me. Are you provided for?

BRAM        Yes. These lodgings are adequate.

ARTHUR      I'm sorry we had to stow you in a boarding house. It was the best we could do under the circumstances.

BRAM        Yes.

ARTHUR      And you appreciate that anything you want, you only have to ask.

BRAM        Yes.

ARTHUR      And your wife?

BRAM She understands.

ARTHUR Can you ask her?

BRAM *(to Lies)* Begrijpt u?<sup>200</sup>

LIES Yes. Yes.

ARTHUR Only - my secretary saw your wife in town yesterday. On St Helen's Square.

BRAM Purchasing food.

ARTHUR Begging for money. She was holding a sign. 'I am a Belgian refugee. I speak no English. I need assistance for my son.'

BRAM Those things are true.

ARTHUR Yes, but this is England. You can't just go around saying you're poor. People don't like it.

BRAM Are you embarrassed by us?

ARTHUR Of course not.

BRAM Your secretary - she told you because we make you look ungenerous in the city.

ARTHUR She told me because you come under the school's duty of care.

BRAM They think you neglect your 'pet Belgians'. I have heard the talking. Everyone must have a pet Belgian to feed and keep.

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<sup>200</sup> Do you understand?

ARTHUR      You know we don't see you that way.

BRAM        *You* perhaps. But your city? Your country?

ARTHUR      I don't see what anyone else has to do with it.

BRAM        They look. They watch.

ARTHUR      You're something new. York isn't used to new things. Or foreign things.

BRAM        They look as they would look at a parasite.

ARTHUR      They look at you as evidence of the fact that a great wrong was done to your country.

BRAM        I am 'evidence'. I would prefer to be a man.

ARTHUR      That will come.

BRAM        No. They will never see a man, Mr Rowntree. A man would provide for his family. A man gives his wife a home. A man could look after his only son.

ARTHUR      Is something the matter with Yannick?

BRAM        I am not a husband. I am not a father. I am a 'pet Belgian'.  
My wife goes to do the only thing we can.

*Pause.*

ARTHUR      'I am a Belgian refugee. I need assistance for my son.'

Remarkable English for someone who gives no indication of speaking any.

BRAM            We want to go home. On our own terms. If we can make enough money –

ARTHUR        You can't. You can't go home. Not until the war is over. There is no home for you there.

BRAM            We are willing to try.

ARTHUR        They burned your house. If you go back, you'll be shot.

*Bram is unrepentant. Beat.*

ARTHUR        Well, you'll have to try another way. You can't go begging in the streets.

BRAM            Do Britons find that ignoring poverty is likely to solve it?

ARTHUR        Yes but you're not in poverty. You said it yourself. Anything you need, I can help you.

BRAM            No. Not everything.

ARTHUR        Name it. Name it and I can help you.

BRAM            Not this time -

ARTHUR        If this is about some sort of male hunter-gatherer instinct, I'd just as soon -

*Lies goes to a mail tray by the door, picks up a letter and hands it to Arthur.*

*A pause.*

BRAM           Your Military Service Act. We received the letter yesterday.

This is why we want to go home. You think we will be shot in Belgium? My son will be shot in France, fighting for the British Army.

You say you can help us with everything: can you stop your army from taking my son?

ARTHUR       It isn't my army. We can fight this.

*Lies laughs.*

BRAM           Lies - stop ermee!<sup>201</sup>

ARTHUR       Why is she laughing?

*Lies stares down Arthur. A beat.*

LIES           You. 'Fight'.

*She spits out a Flemish sentence at Bram. Arthur looks to him for translation.*

BRAM           It's nothing.  
She says you Quakers don't fight anything. What would you know.

She doesn't mean anything by it.

ARTHUR       I doubt that.

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<sup>201</sup> Stop it!

*Lies speaks again to Bram.*

BRAM        Lies.

ARTHUR      She has something else to say?

BRAM        No.

*Lies speaks to him.*

ARTHUR      Tell me.

BRAM        No.

*Lies shouts frantically. Bram is adamant. Lies turns to Arthur.*

LIES         You are British. British army for British men. You first. Then my  
son.

*Lies leaves.*

*Pause.*

BRAM        I am sorry that she said that.

ARTHUR      Because you disagree?

BRAM        You are a guest. I am sorry.

ARTHUR      She thinks I ought to fight.  
She appreciates I could barely lift a gun at my age.

BRAM            She thinks you are not her son.

ARTHUR        And what do you think?

BRAM            I have no issue with Yannick fighting. But if he fights, he should fight for Belgium. Not because the British army demands it like a spoiled child.

ARTHUR        Surely – we’re on the same side. I would think it all comes down to the same thing in the end.

BRAM            It ‘comes down to’ dignity. I have none here. I want it for him. I want him to fight for his own country.

ARTHUR        Wouldn’t you rather he had peace?

BRAM            You tell us not to beg, but you have never been poor. Wait until your country is invaded, and then tell me you will not fight for it.

*Bram and Arthur exit.*

*Time shift. Ellen enters, sets the room to order, picks up the military service letter from where it has been dropped on the floor.*

ELLEN            Lies and Bram Verhoeven were moved to a house near the Rowntree Factory later that year. When the telegram came about Yannick, it fell to me to redirect it there. We never saw them again after that. Officially, the city wanted them off the streets, but privately, we hoped a chance for Bram to earn a living and pay his way would settle them until the war was over. That is, in so far as a parent without their child can ever truly be settled.

As the war went on, as it took more liberties and only sons, it was hard not to notice a certain bitterness. Harder still not to be swept up in it, to ask why Yannick. Why Wilcox. And why not others? Why these particular boys, and why now? Sometimes, I found it hard to find love for an arbitrary God.

*November 1917. Ellen, in the pews of a Catholic church. Allegri's Miserere. Above looms the cross.*

*Pepler, a former student in his late twenties, comes to sit next to her.*

PEPLER        Arthur didn't come then.

ELLEN         He had matters to attend to at school.

PEPLER        I thought you'd both enjoy the choir. I wouldn't have tried to convert him. I promise.

ELLEN         No. He knows that.

PEPLER        Arthur Rowntree was a man of unshakeable faith when I was at school.

ELLEN         Well. The war has made everything more... shakeable, I suppose.

PEPLER        The day the Rowntrees stop being Quakers, the Germans will have really done their bit.

ELLEN         Pepler, if it came to it, why do you think we'd blame the Germans? I believe the real blame would lie somewhat closer to home.



PEPLER Yes. The government's been - there's been some bad business with the Quakers.

ELLEN Nothing that you'd know anything about.

*Pause.*

ELLEN That was unkind.

PEPLER No. It's alright.

*Beat.*

PEPLER My family are still Quakers, you know. My brother. Left Bootham three years after me. That would have been - 1912. He's with the Royal Fusilliers now.

*Beat.*

Not of his own doing, I should add. Spent a year or so in prison, before he gave himself up. I suppose a man can only take so much.

ELLEN I'm sorry.

PEPLER I know.

ELLEN I have all this bitterness, and nowhere to put it.

PEPLER There's always the Suffragettes.

ELLEN Sometimes I think if no-one calls you up to defend your beliefs, you start to forget what it is you believe in.

PEPLER But could you though? Could you defend yourself against all this?

ELLEN You seem to have managed it.

PEPLER I never had to. I had a note.  
When they gave it to me, actually it rather reminded me of the sickness notes at school. 'Please sir, I can't play cricket today.'  
I never went before a committee. I don't know what I'd have done if I had. Buckled instantly, I don't doubt.

ELLEN You were quite the fighter at school.

PEPLER Times have changed.

ELLEN Apparently. I remember when Arthur had to reprimand you on the school playground for 'using a watering can to teach the young idea how to shoot'. That couldn't have been more than.. 1909.

PEPLER Yes. He quite put the fear of God in me. And look where that's got us now.

ELLEN You couldn't get enough of fighting once. Now – this.  
We raise so many Quaker boys not to fight. We put ourselves between them and the world and say, 'this is not for you', but they don't listen. And now the one, the *one* we catch and hold, is the one who, even in peace time, couldn't wait to throw himself on the gunnery.

PEPLER I'm as surprised as you.

ELLEN I doubt that.

PEPLER I suppose I had my fill with gardening tools.

*Silence.*

PEPLER        (*indicating*) Do you like it?

ELLEN         It's very... large.

PEPLER        Damned by faint praise, I think.

ELLEN         I'm no expert. I'm sure you can tell.

PEPLER        You're quite right though. The thing is nearly twenty feet across.  
It's almost vulgar in some ways. But then – at least it's significant.  
It might be the first thing I've done that's felt that way.

*Pause.*

Arthur had matters to attend to?

ELLEN         He didn't feel he could leave the school unmanned.

PEPLER        He's worried the people of York would ransack the place?  
You know, I don't think you're meant to lie in a house of God.

ELLEN         No. I suppose he didn't think it politic to come. He doesn't know  
what he thinks about you. Your being here. He didn't want to come  
– half-cooked.

PEPLER        And you – ? You know what you think?

ELLEN         No.

PEPLER        But you came anyway.

ELLEN I like the grandness of the Catholic mass. Quakers never seem to have grasped elegant music.

*Beat.*

You've had it very easy, you know.

PEPLER You didn't want it to be easy for us?

ELLEN I didn't say that. But – the other boys – one can't help but feeling...

PEPLER ...What has he done that's so special?

I wondered that too, afterwards. A special dispensation to carve the stations of the cross at the Cathedral of St Frances. Must be something astounding. Earth shatteringly massive.

I worked for months. It felt the most important thing.

And then I stepped back from it at the end and I looked. Really looked. And all I could think was – here is the value of a man's life. Fourteen blocks. Five foot square. Hopton Wood limestone. That's how much it cost me not to die.

I know Arthur doesn't understand why I merit exemption and the other boys don't. I don't understand it either.

ELLEN He isn't angry. Not at you, anyway.

PEPLER You think I should be fighting.

ELLEN No. But it's hard to be happy when everything seems so without reason. To understand what either of us did to set ourselves apart.

PEPLER        You're a woman. Of course you don't have to fight.

ELLEN         And that's it, is it? God save the women and the stone masons.

PEPLER        That seems about the sum of it.

*Pause.*

ELLEN         Do you ever think about going?

PEPLER        My exemption is for the 'duration of the war'. They didn't know how long it would take.

ELLEN         The war?

PEPLER        The carving.

ELLEN         But you've finished now. You could still go.

*Pause.*

PEPLER        They're singing a setting of Psalm 51. The Miserere.

'For Thou desirest no sacrifice, else would I give it Thee:  
but Thou delightest not in burnt-offerings.  
O be favourable and gracious unto Sion: build Thou the walls of  
Jerusalem.'

This whole war is a neverending stream of burnt offerings. Go down to the docks and you'll see them carting burnt offerings into the hospitals. I'm choosing to build the walls of my church. Of my country. There has to be something to come back to.

I won't go to war. If I'd had to, I hope I could have stood up for that, but I thank God for a profession that means I don't have to, and for the school I learned it from.

I didn't do anything to set myself apart, Ellen. You did it for me.

*Silence. The pair look up at the cross. Pepler leaves Ellen in the pew.*

*Time shift.*

ELLEN            In the end, I suppose, I have to hope we did the best we could with what was given to us. The Quakers say we should follow in God's light, wherever that light might lead, and when the way was dark, our old scholars were there to show us the path, to remind us of what we had achieved. What we had built together.

*Ellen in the Art Department, February 1918. Enter Midgley – a former student now in his 30s. He is recently released from military hospital.*

ELLEN            I think this may be a first, Midgley.

MIDGLEY        I'm sorry?

ELLEN            You've had a cigarette stuck to your lip every day since you came here from the hospital.

MIDGLEY        Think of it as a peace offering.

ELLEN            I'd rather think of it as a permanent fixture. I can understand what you're saying for once.

MIDGLEY        Arthur said I'd find you in here.

ELLEN Yes. I'd rather not see him now.

MIDGLEY Well, I suppose that's marriage for you.  
I didn't follow why you'd be in the art department, but he clearly knows you better than I do.

ELLEN Then he ought to know I'd like to be left in peace. Go and tell him.

MIDGLEY You're asking me to leave.

ELLEN Yes.

MIDGLEY Then, respectfully – no. It strikes me now isn't a time to be alone.

ELLEN I don't want to hear about how this is God's plan.

MIDGLEY Good, because I don't want to tell you.

*An almost companionable silence.*

MIDGLEY Some of this art work – it's an acquired taste. That one is a – (*he tilts his head sideways*) – no. I'm at a loss. A pig, possibly.

ELLEN I think it's an apple.

MIDGLEY You find comfort in badly drawn fruit.

ELLEN You left the school too early to remember. In 1914, we turned the art classrooms into a naval hospital, briefly.

MIDGLEY You know, I've been in a military hospital. I can't imagine the screaming punctuated lessons very well.

ELLEN I wouldn't know. It was never used.

MIDGLEY Well, strike me down. A landlocked city with an unused naval hospital.

ELLEN You think this is funny?

MIDGLEY No, I think it's a tragedy. When people have to choose between education and victory I think it's a tragedy. But your boys never had to choose, and I find enough thanks in that to find the joy in it. They can go on drawing their pig-apples in peace.

ELLEN Not all of them. And this isn't peace.

MIDGLEY I've been outside. This school is as close to peace as they're going to get for a while.

ELLEN It was – almost immediate, the change, you know. August 1914 – it was a matter of hours between the declaration and the telegram to tell us there was heavy fighting on the North Sea at Scarborough. The boys came in over the holiday, and we transformed the place in a matter of days. Where you're sitting – the first beds went there.

MIDGLEY The first? It's hardly room for more than five or six.

ELLEN The school was equipped for 155 patients.

MIDGLEY Equipped isn't the same as prepared.

ELLEN We were as prepared as we could be.



MIDGLEY No-one can ever be prepared enough. Not for amputees and shell shock. 155 of them inside the school would have been...

ELLEN Enough space for the *H.M.S. Glenart Castle*.

MIDGLEY Ellen.

ELLEN 153 dead, Midgley.

MIDGLEY It's a war.

ELLEN It was a *hospital ship*.

MIDGLEY It was an *enemy* ship. They don't make that distinction.

ELLEN A hospital isn't an enemy. It's a *hospital*.  
They shot the boat. And then when the survivors were in the water, they shot them through their life jackets. With machine guns. They shot the *doctors*.

MIDGLEY Doctors treating British soldiers. You fix them, put them back on their feet, and then they come back to kill more Germans. What did you expect? Don't be naïve Ellen.

ELLEN Four of our boys were on that ship. Ambulance workers.

MIDGLEY I know. Arthur told me.

ELLEN They were our boys. It didn't matter what country their patients were from. They helped them anyway. That's what we taught them.

MIDGLEY I know.

I'm sorry, Ellen.

ELLEN            They came back two months ago when the ship was dry docked. When Arthur came to tell... I felt sure he was going to say they were back again. They'd be nattering about 'that ruddy ship' and we'd get them cocoa and pack them off to bed.

MIDGLEY        There's nothing you could have done.

ELLEN            When we made this room into the hospital – when we made it into a hospital, the government sent inspectors, generals to the school. Army generals in a Quaker school. It was... And they looked the place round, and do you know what they said? They said it was a 'model hospital'.

MIDGLEY        I'm sure it was.

ELLEN            That can mean two things, can't it, 'model hospital'. It's a brilliant example, or it's just a game of pretend. It's like you said - a prime specimen of a hospital in our ridiculous little untouched, unprepared art room?

MIDGLEY        I didn't mean it like that.

ELLEN            Yes you did. And you should. We were pushing the beds and tables and nurses around our model hospital, playing at war like children. And I never thought... Five hundred miles away, and the war has never been so close to home as now. It never felt real until this.

It's hard to think we aren't being -- mocked somehow. We had everything here. We could have helped. But we got rid of it, all the beds and... and now –

MIDGLEY     The *Glenart Castle* was shot in the Bristol Channel, Ellen. There was nothing you could have done. Even if you'd had the places to spare. They'd have died before they got here.

ELLEN        Because it was God's plan, and we couldn't possibly interfere with that.

MIDGLEY     I don't know about God. You know what I do know? There are boys here who need you to teach them that the world needs more doctors. These four have died; we need to go out there and replace them.

ELLEN        You mean, to perpetuate the war.

MIDGLEY     I mean to catch the broken bodies, whatever they're doing at the time.

Like the school caught me.

I'll tell Arthur you'll be in in a minute, shall I?

ELLEN        What will you say I've been doing?

MIDGLEY     Enjoying the artwork.

*Midgley leaves Ellen alone onstage.*

ELLEN        For all my experience now – I find there are still times when the war left me with nothing to say.

*A time shift. 1938.*

ARTHUR      Still writing, Ellen.

ELLEN            Compiling.

ARTHUR          The boys are quite missing you at supper. They've come all this way to see their old headmaster and his obviously much younger wife, and you're denying them the privilege.

ELLEN            They're hardly boys anymore Arthur; they're grown men.

ARTHUR          Sometimes I remember that. And then I remember how Harding once wrote in an exam that Henry VIII was one of the Apostles. They'll always be boys to me.

ELLEN            I think you'll find he said Henry VIII wrote the Bible. The King James Bible.

ARTHUR          An interesting version of history, I'm sure. But what are *you* writing?

ELLEN            A rather dull version.  
The publisher plans to call it 'Scraps from a Bootham Diary in the Great War'. I don't believe I care for my work being referred to as 'scraps'.

ARTHUR          He doesn't think customers will buy it expecting a soldier?

ELLEN            I'm sure that's exactly what he *does* think. In fact, I believe he's rather banking on it.

ARTHUR          Let me see.

ELLEN            You've never taken an interest before.

ARTHUR I take interest in a great deal of things.

ELLEN Not this.

ARTHUR Come now. I believe you once let Joseph Dewbury read it.

*Ellen looks at him sharply.*

Oh, don't look so shocked. You remember he was playing in *Time and the Conways* at the Playhouse last month. Really rather well by all accounts – I believe his mother finally got her wish. And when I went backstage, he asked after you. You and your writing, he said. I had to feign being knowledgeable about the whole thing.

ELLEN You usually do, Arthur.

*She concedes the page to him.*

ARTHUR (*reading*) There is much to be said of our years at Bootham. It seems one book would hardly be sufficient to hold it all. Nevertheless, the Great War looms large, and it is those years that stand out. In all my days gone by, and in those yet to come, I believe our years of war will be the most passionately felt; the most strongly fought for; the most immediately lived. It was never a path I would have chosen for myself, or for the world, and yet I find myself reaching now for the sense of spirit and fellowship we found then.

*He puts the paper down.*

Which were you trying to hide – the writing or the sentiment?

ELLEN A little of both.

We were so lucky, Arthur. Luckier than the Quakers who went to jail. Luckier than the ones who didn't. Luckier I don't doubt than the boys we taught.

ARTHUR      Then come and speak to the ones downstairs.

ELLEN        I don't think I could.  
Everything is – I struggle to write it down, never mind say it out loud.

ARTHUR      Then you don't have to say anything. Just be with us. That sense of fellowship – it isn't gone. We did our best, and these ones made it back to us.

*Ellen looks at her script.*

ELLEN        I'll join you soon, I promise.

ARTHUR      Don't be too long. And here.

*He goes into his shirt pocket, takes out a piece of paper, hands it to her.*

ELLEN        What's this?

ARTHUR      You're not the only one indulging in a bit of secret penmanship, you know.

*Ellen makes to read it.*

Oh God no, don't read it now; I'm not so brave as you.  
Come down soon, yes?

*He leaves. Ellen reads.*

ELLEN        “Throughout these years the Fates were kindly: home and friends,  
books and nature feared not to sow their seeds because of the  
birds. Some seeds fell by the wayside, some on rocky places and  
some on thorns. Others, let us hope, fell on the good ground<sup>202</sup>,  
there to flourish in faith and peace.”

*Ellen slots this piece into her folder and writes,*

Ellen and Arthur Rowntree, December, 1938.

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<sup>202</sup> ‘Throughout these years the Fates were kindly ... fell on the good ground’ – from Arthur Rowntree’s own writing, ‘Notes on Those Years’, available from Bootham School’s archive.