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A Guided Critical Analysis of David Greig's *Fragile*

The Context:

David Greig (1969) is a Scottish playwright and director whose work has been performed in Britain's major theatres. The short play *Fragile*, included in the Oberon Books anthology *Theatre Uncut* (2011), was written, as the other plays in the collection, as part of an artistic and political action of protest against the austerity measures taken by David Cameron and Nick Clegg's coalition government in 2010. In the UK—as it happened also in Spain, Greece, Italy and many other countries around the world—the global financial crisis of 2008 had severe consequences and, since 2010, drastic cuts to public spending were implemented.

David Greig, Clara Brennan, Lucy Kirkwood, Laura Lomas, Mark Ravenhill and other playwrights wrote and donated short plays that were made available on the project's website for a week in March 2011 to be used freely by anyone anywhere and there were 89 simultaneous premieres across the globe. London ticket sales profits were donated to the Child Poverty Action Group.

The Text:

Read the text and answer the following questions. This is an analytic task and thus it must be based on a proper close reading of the play script. All your answers must include quotations from the primary and secondary texts. Build your response and arguments on a thorough analysis of the text.

1. On the AUDIENCE BRIEFING. The first clever way Greig has the audience become aware of the dramatic consequences of public CUTS is by having just one actor to play the role of Jack, in a play written as a dialogue: to less money, less actors.

- What is the consequence of not having an actress to play the role of Caroline? Who must play the part and what is the effect on the staging of the play and audience participation? Please relate your answer to the concept of the “fourth wall” and then argue whether you think this is an effective strategy of communication with the audience to raise political or social awareness (think of who these characters are or what they make for a living).

2. SPACE: Make a detailed analysis of the set in order to imagine the play in performance.

- Is it a realistic setting? Is there any use of symbolic space? Make a list of the stage props needed to perform the play. Could you perform it in our classroom or in Espai Cultural at Facultat de Filologia, Traducció i Comunicació at the University



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of Valencia? Try to describe how you would organise a collective performance of this play.

3. CHARACTER AND CHARACTERIZATION. Analyse how the character of Jack is constructed.

- Is it a complex character? Analyse the use of costume and props, dramatic language and gestures to assess character development. The play is titled *Fragile*. Is Jack a “fragile” character or does the fragility relate to something else?

4. THEMES, IMAGERY AND SYMBOLISM.

There is in the text a reference to a man called Mohamed Bouazizi.

- Is he a real or a fictional character? To what political uprising is this figure related? Is this an effective reference to (at least symbolically) connect individual action to collective action? Does it reconfigure your understanding of fragility and precariousness and their relation to politics?