

**Monday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2006**

Jon, Clare & Andy Smith

Exercise 1. The South Bank Show

Andy was Melvin Bragg and introduced Unlimited Theatre Company and their new play *Tangle*, he went on to interview Jon and Clare about their working process. Jon and Clare were allowed to interject and cut each other off as if the show had been edited.

**Outcome**

Jon is concerned with performance and Clare is a storyteller, she is visual and poetic.

There is a density to *Tangle*, as with much of Unlimited's work and they wish to find parts of the script in which they can hold a hand out to the audience.

They are bored with writers who have only one thing to say. The process can almost be an extension of the hand holding, as with their scratch performances of *Tangle*.

Concerns were raised with the reality that the play itself may be performed by other actors after creating characters who are entangled within their own (Unlimited's) personalities; so they need to address the problems associated with an actor outside of the company playing Jon playing Malcolm, for example.

Exercise 2. Heroes Dos and Don'ts

We were asked to write a list of traits/characteristics/abilities that a Hero can and cannot have, e.g. they can fly; they can't ride a bike very well.

Exercise 3. What is *Tangle*?

Jon and Clare had ten minutes to explain what *Tangle* is about, as if their partner had the theatre knowledge of a dramaturg. This was written down by the listener and read aloud to the group afterwards.

Exercise 4. Inferring Heroic Qualities

Jon and Clare took turns to infer heroic qualities upon each other, describing in detail what the other was capable of and what was special/heroic about them.

Exercise 5. Questions 1

What is a hero? What does a hero look like? Name a hero and explain why they are one.

### Exercise 6. What is *Tangle*? Part II

Jon and Clare had five minutes to explain to a “mate” (who has no interest in or knowledge of theatre) what *Tangle* is about and why they should come and see it.

Outcome – this was a difficult task; it was hard to condense the play.

### Exercise 7. Rewrite 1

Andy had sourced texts from the Internet with connections/references to heroes; the group took snippets of this text and highlighted the sentences that appealed to them.

### Exercise 8. Questions 2

Who are your heroes? What makes them your hero? Could you be a hero?

**Outcome** - the question asking yourself if *you* could be a hero highlighted the personal aspect, could we proclaim ourselves a hero?

### Exercise 9. ‘On the Difficulty of Being An Ideal Hero’

We wrote our own version of the poem *On the Difficulty of Imagining An Ideal City* by Georges Perec, renamed ‘On the Difficulty of Being An Ideal Hero’ highlighting the benefits and difficulties involved with heroism.

**Outcome** - led to a discussion about trust, and who the narrator within the story is. If you proclaim yourself a hero this will establish a gap between character/performer and audience as the audience will try to undermine this proclamation.

### Exercise 10. Questions 3

Why are heroes important? What sort of person is most likely to be a hero? What type of person is least likely to be a hero?

### Exercise 11. Hero Poem

Using the highlighted text we created a 6-line poem about Heroes.

### Exercise 12. Performance

To a playlist of music we felt embodied the theme of ‘Heroes’ we read out the material we had so far created, taking turns to watch and perform.

### **Outcome**

Success: Due to excessive, dense material the repetition of phrases/text worked well; throwing out questions to the audience; the bold dramatic performances at the front of the stage; the light-heartedness and pleasure, and using each other to infer heroic status upon them. Paradoxes and statements about why heroes are important and whether there is a hero in me.

Failure: The excess of material and the length of longer pieces, too much information to process for an audience.

\*Brechtian device of stepping out to say what a character wanted to but couldn't at that moment.

\*Giving your thoughts to an audience who may not have thought about them before they came.

### Exercise 13. Re-working the text

Taking the text we had performed we highlighted the most relevant/interesting sentences. Then using the phrases "Imagine", "A hero is..." and "I have been thinking about..." to begin a sentence we created new material with the highlighted text.

\*Again, the repetition and light-heartedness was most illuminating.

## **Tuesday 24th January 2006**

Jon, Clare, Liz & Andy

### Performance

Liz joined Jon, Clare and Andy today so as an introduction to yesterday's work on 'Heroes', the group presented the re-worked text to her using the 'Ghost Room' technique.

Liz's feedback - enjoyed the South Bank show type prologue; inferring heroic qualities upon each other, the paradoxes from *The Difficulty of being An Ideal Hero*, the discussion of different types of heroes, the idea of community and assumption that of course they exist. Liz did not like the fragmented text, needs more feeling and less confusion, the lack of light-heartedness.

\*Must attempt to create an interconnected narrative.

\*Want an audience to feel that they have been caught up in "mind-fucking science".

\*Attention drawn to the parallels of the characters

\*Need to make decisions on what is needed to tell the story: set, costumes, what are the laboratory conditions?

\*Identify the variables over the three weeks and make informed decisions.

### Exercise 1. Inference of Hero Status

Jon, Liz and Clare took turns to infer heroic abilities upon each other.

### **Outcome**

Highlighted the importance of the details in *how* you are told something (different approaches – naturalism, ridiculous) the collusion, the audience being let in on the secret, the layers – how much should an audience be given?

For example, should Flora be given a mixture of fantastical and every day abilities, which are demonstrated later in the play, allowing the audience to discover the truth?

\*How do we tell an audience in a way that augments rather than disrupts? How do we add layers? Which devices can we use that will simplify but complicate simultaneously?

### Exercise 2. The South Bank Show – Part II

Liz joined the discussion and Melvin asked Unlimited the question “What do you want to get out of *Tangle*?”

**Outcome** - to tell a fascinating story with complete characters and a satisfying ending but one which leaves the audiences asking questions. To blur the lines between performers and characters. It would be an achievement to give the audience an understanding of the physics behind the science. We want the audience to choose between the four performers and four characters, which do they root for?

\*Discussion emerged regarding Unlimited and the notion that they have never really created a play with an ending that is properly resolved, with the possible exception of *Shades*. Do we want to limit the audience? How do we illuminate and resolve the stories of the characters we have created? Do we decide which performer/character is the true hero?

Melvin asked the company members to invent one possible conclusion for their characters in the play.

#### **Outcome**

Hamish – successfully teleports himself, but we do not find out if his memory and emotions are intact.

Flora – she is holding out for her hero, either Carlos or Malcolm. The love story between them succeeds, but Carlos may be dead.

Malcolm – discovers what happened to Carlos (who ended up a drunk, in some home perhaps) but hides the truth with a cover story to protect Flora.

Jocelyn – moves to America to run her own research lab.

\* Ideas discussed: Multiple endings; the idea of other actors playing the characters – do the actors apologise for the absence of Jon/Liz etc, and say they will be playing them tonight (Even when they are there)?

### Exercise 3. Read through of *Tangle*

#### **Outcome**

How do we entangle without just juxtaposing? There needs a link between Tomsk and Carlos and Hamish and Jocelyn, and the Eldridge particle. Do we entangle the endings of the characters with the science? Changing the variables, e.g. making Flora a scientist?

### Exercise 4. Writing Interjections

Drawing upon text and material on heroes from the day before, in pairs they had to create a few lines of text to interject dialogues in scenes between

Hamish & Jocelyn and Flora & Malcolm. One line had to refer to heroic characteristics and one had to relate to the character's background/history.

### **Outcome**

Does not enlighten or illuminate, it adds "clunkiness", breaks up the already short scenes, disruptive.

\*Maybe they should give characters overt superhero qualities e.g. Jocelyn a bionic arm, and later she opens a tin. Collecting a set of refrains and capturing ideas of heroes.

1. How do we ENTANGLE the script MORE?

Is it what you leave in an audience's head rather than what is in the script, an image or event e.g. superhero costume?

2. What do we like/agree on?

Inscribing each other as heroes

Making people beautiful

Finding the technology to entangle, an alternative to text; a visual dimension.

Making a mind map to work out the web within the script; creating new links and ways to entangle.

Focus on the beginning to solve the end? At the moment we have lots of causes and no effects.

Repetition of dialogue between characters, (in separate scenes), repetition of gestures (to be explored within rehearsals)

### Exercise 5. Repetition – Airplane Scene

To explore the idea of repetition and entanglement of dialogue Jon and Liz performed the Airplane scene whilst Clare and Andy picked out words and phrases that could be used to construct dialogue for Jocelyn in a later scene.

### **Outcome**

Pulling out linguistic tricks and embedding them into the script highlights the important issues and the entanglement of Malcolm and Jocelyn.

\*This can be magnified in a scene on Wimbledon common with J & H underground and F & M over ground, as the siblings get physically closer the entanglement in the dialogue gets stronger. This scene could develop the passions of the characters e.g. the love story between M & F and the awkward resolution between J & H.

### Exercise 6. Introductions

Jon, Liz and Clare had to write an introduction and an ending in the style of a frame of a comic strip, including stage directions, setting, time, and dialogue or thought bubble for your character.

### **Outcome**

Liked the idea of an introduction because it is light, knowingly cheap and comic book, it sets up the piece as an *adventure*.

Gives a route into the characters, immediately sets up relationships, brings in the exposition and frames the fictionalisation.

**Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> January 2006**

Jon, Clare, Liz, Chris & Andy

Chris joined the rest of the company today. He was interested in exploring the idea of playfulness, integrating the performers and characters, using superhero costumes.

### Exercise 1. The South Bank Show part III

Melvin asked why the idea of exploring heroes is so important?

The notion of heroism has been devalued, compared to Roman and ancient Greek times when the world was smaller and people knew far less about science and mankind, a hero was something to aspire to be. Society is much more fragmented and the term 'hero' can be applied to many more people. In a world today where we enjoy a greater knowledge of science is the notion of myth lost?

Current mass-produced fiction still perpetrates the idea of the lone, white male who heroically saves the world. We are still drawn to heroes, we acknowledge our need for them but we feel cheated when we are lied to.

How do we define what we think a hero is? Do we have heroes? What is the relevance to today? Is there a reluctance to admit we might need them? Is it childish? What is the difference between admiring someone and making them your hero?

We are looking at the political context of heroism, in the way that it can be manipulated (e.g. the American football star who became a soldier and was killed in Iraq).

The retrospective nature of heroism makes it difficult to claim in the moment. Time and story telling creates heroes. Is heroism an act of selflessness that can only be identified in reflection?

The scale of heroism is important, you against the world, the under-dog/outsider status.

Heroism makes you remember the brilliantness of human beings, the greatness that we are all capable of.

### Exercise 2. Dress Up

Andy edited the Heroes text that had been generated over the past few days into poems.

One person read a poem to music, whilst another used various items of clothing to dress a third person up as a hero and place them in a hero pose during the scene.

### **Outcome**

This method articulated everything they wanted to say about heroism in a visual way. Playing against the music and text highlighted the paradoxes, e.g. the song '9 to 5' illuminated the alter ego and the idea that it could be mundane too. The images encapsulated different types of hero – political prisoner, granny, special needs.

Process of transformation was interesting, using a 'normal' source to create something other (e.g. coat as cape), it also normalised the heroes. They enjoyed the spontaneity, and repetition of text.

\*Reversal of the imagery of superheroes, maybe do a straight scene, naturalistically but dressed as in superhero costumes.

### Exercise 3.

Writing on separate blank postcards, give yourself/other members and your character 5 superhero abilities; create 5 opening scenarios (previous to the world of the play) and compose 5 lines of dialogue for your character.

Andy read an opening scenario and the company took turns to read out dialogue that might be applicable, and introduce themselves and/or character and their abilities, they swapped round the cards and repeated the exercise.

### **Outcome**

This drew on the idea of repetition and everyone sharing lives.

### Exercise 4. Conclusions

Write the final line that your character might say in a comic book style.

### **Outcome**

Lifts the comic element of the play and leaves the audience with a sense of continuation.

### Exercise 5. Entangling the script – writing new scenes

Write a new scene to drive the narrative using existing pieces of dialogue but put it in a new context.

Perform the scene straight, thinking about where it is set. Perform the scene again with someone else dressing one of the characters up as a hero as the scene progresses.

### Scene 1. Flora & Malcolm

(Takes place after scene in Park)

Good way to include other members of the company. Integrated the theme of heroes with the notion of actors as performers playing characters. New way for the company to open up scenes.

When Liz was dressed as hero it gave a satirical comment on the feminist desire Flora is exerting.

\*Maybe scenes could be repeated with different processes of presenting who the hero might be.

### Scene 2 Hamish & Jocelyn

(In the lab, very near the end)

It was good to watch Chris dress himself in the hero costume; this child like behaviour makes his character more endearing. You see another side to Hamish as slightly crazed, a risk taker.

\*Hamish could be fuelled by the fact that when he was a child he wanted to be Superman but was ridiculed and unpopular.

### Scene 3 Flora & Malcolm

(Office in downtown LA)

This could possibly be used as a flashback if they devised a way in which this could work without being too cheesy.

Is a hero intervention necessary in this scene? Perhaps something subtler would be more suitable e.g. Clarke Kent glasses or a different type of hero e.g. Phillip Marlow (Trilby or Panama hat) as a reference to heroes of sixty years ago. Would this be too "film pastiche"?

If Jon is dressed as a hero in this scene (which would be a flashback to Flora and Malcolm's first meeting) then it would suggest that Malcolm has been a hero all along.

\*The different points at which the performers are dressed as superheroes could be a comment on the different ways that characters become heroes.

### Scene 4 Hamish & Jocelyn

(Jocelyn is packing to leave)

As Clare is being dressed as a hero, Hamish's costume is being removed.

This could be a flashback to time he stole from her before, used as a refrain to demonstrate the centre of their relationship. Hamish is humanised as this shows him trying to reach out to Jocelyn who rejects him (does this make her an anti-hero).

### Scene 5 Hamish & Jocelyn

(In between the sighting of M&F and the teleportation scene)

#### **Outcome**

It challenges conventions and encourages an audience to invest. Excellent way of entangling the themes through repetition of dialogue from other parts of the script.

\*This could build throughout the play so that by the final scene all performers are dressed up in superhero costumes for "I am not your hero..."

## Exercise 7. Mapping the play

On a large piece of paper map out the time line of the play

It was suggested the day before as an exercise that would allow them to entangle the script more by identifying the gaps and linking them, however it was felt that this was achieved through the creation of new scenes using existing dialogue.

### **Outcome**

Andy asked what was missing from the script so far?

The Wombles were identified as a theme that had not been integrated as much as originally planned. They are important because they are demonstrative of Unlimited; a self-contained unit with strong friendships that operate as a family. Do the Wombles need to be made more heroic?

How do you feel about the Hero text in the script so far?

Undeveloped, obvious and unsurprising, more intellectual depth is required. "I am not your hero..." needs to be stripped and reworked.

\*Pulling lines of the Hero Event "bookends" into the rest of the play could further entangle the script.

Will there be a big grand ending?

The four actors in superhero costumes will perform "I am not your hero..." as the beautiful conclusion.

Obligated to finish the narrative, this could be done using the technology of using existing lines. It is not necessary to have a volatile scene.

Why is there a fear of the final scene and making decisions as to the outcome of the narrative?

Need to look at it as four characters in the room building to the point of suspense, the peak it does not have to conclude the story. Do not want to cheat the audience out of witnessing this peak that the play has built to. Something must happen to validate the entanglement.

How do we tie up the loose ends?

\*Hamish teleports himself successfully but when he emerges he is entangled with everyone around him, speaking in unison with the others on stage.

What is it that we want to say? Why do we like the brother/sister relationship? What is its purpose? Do they find out that they are related? Hamish and Jocelyn are definitely brother and sister- this is decided.

### **Sticking Point**

What is the wider message that we are trying to convey?

We should have a truly good pay off moment, but we do not want the audience to only think that the entanglement is due to the fact that J & M are related and put it down to genetics; it should not lessen the impact of entanglement.

We want the audience to leave and contemplate the 'spooky actions at a distance' (S.A.A.A.D) phenomena and next time something similar happens consider the notion of 'Quantum Entanglement' as a possibility, as a way to carry yourself in the world.

### **Narrative Ending**

Hamish teleports himself and is now entangled with the environment around him, this is the effect that allows Jocelyn to give up her equation. There will be a new scene where she adds Quantum Entanglement to her equation, enabling the audience to see this as the answer.

Flora finds an answer to her search for Uncle Carlos, and as she always believed that he did teleport himself she now knows that his atoms exploded and are now entangled with herself and everyone around her.

The love story between Malcolm and Flora blossoms and we see a snippet of their destiny (in comic book fashion, perhaps ten years down the line or as part of multiple endings).

\*This feels like a full stop to what Unlimited as a company want to say but leaves the ending open.

### **Andy's conclusions**

- Interested in the notion that stories and fantastic myths still need to be told and in exploring form, style and content.
- He enjoyed experimenting with visual and narrative techniques, finding different theatrical qualities, searching for the lightness, playfulness and ways in which to hold a hand out to the audience.
- Excited by the notion of someone playing Unlimited - playing the characters in *Tangle*. This works with the idea of questioning realities and entanglement and illuminates the fact that the company have been working together for ten years.
- Creating a wonderful dense landscape filled with possibilities.

### **What is in the bank so far, what do we know we like and or need to develop further?**

- 19 pages of script
- 5 new entangled scenes
- Underground/Over ground scene
- Hamish post teleportation scene
- Jocelyn S.A.A.A.D equation scene
- Flora/Carlos atom explosion
- Introducing us and each of our characters (description of superhero abilities)
- Computer voice hero event
- Hero lists, Hero poems (text generated from Monday)

- Comic book introductions
- Comic book multiple endings (Malcolm & Flora's destiny)
- Dressing up as heroes
- "I am not your hero..." finale
- Book-ends
- Further entanglement of original scenes
- Repetition of scenes e.g. the argument and using them as a refrain
- Comic book interjections

### **What do you want to achieve by the end of week 1?**

- Possibly generate 10 – 20 more pages of script, more material than is needed.
- No need to continue to experiment and make new discoveries with an interrogative, destructive force but to solidify what we have found and created so far.
- Plan for the next two days is to write the new scenes we have agreed on, type up the rough ones we have created and edit existing text we want to entangle further.
- In agreement that tomorrow when creating new text you must take inspiration from an existing line, including this in anything you write.