Top Class Theatre Studies

Jack Thomson monologue transcript

*Hoods* by Angela Betzien.

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Monologue from pp. 29-39.

He runs  
Dunlops flailing, failing, stripping him of speed  
Imagining Nikes like winged heels on heroes, flying free

Over the BP  
Where inside the attendant, Distended with boredom, Endures his graveyard shift.  
Chugging down Pepsi slush by the bucket…full.   
Sucrose. Kicks.

Flying.

Over the old woman, In her transparent night dress  
In her brick veneer. Frail as fear.  
Peeking through louvres.  
Wrinkled hand poised on the telephone receiver

Flying

Over the park. Where kids are spinning.   
Bingeing goon under a tree  
Their fermented minds finding life's meaning in a cask wine.   
Laughing.  
When they see him passing in the sky.

Flying.

Over the underpass.  
Where an old man sleeps. Stinking of spirits.  
On a stained mattress. Crawling with fleas.  
Dreaming of a room. A bed. Clean sheets.

Flying.

Over the knitted pattern of Christmas tree lights  
Woven like wool into streets

Then, with his telescopic vision.  
He pins a yellow bird. Shining bright.  
A night owl. Open 24 hours every night.  
Earthbound.  
He switches off, his surround sound aerial television. And descends.  
Back on the suburban grid of neon and bitumen.  
His Nikes flight ends.

Pause.

Headlights hunt them, Pin them to the bitumen.  
Long-haul Mack truck blares its horn.  
Screech of brakes. Time stalls.

Pause. Insert special feature.  
Replay.

7am yesterday.  
Kids. Munching cheese, TV, Recharging sucrose fuel. Cardboard Cartoon Cereal. Sugared sweet.

10am. Last day of school. Mum still sleeps  
Sporting a mother of a bruise on her left cheek.  
She wakes up in the ground-floor flat. Splintered door. Fist-punctured walls.  
Recalls.  
[phone rings]

This month’s rent due last week.  
On the way to school she finds a phone and calls…

She gets back to the one bedroom flat.  
Packs.  
Heaps her life into a Crazy Clark’s bag.  
Throws it in the car, slams the door.  
And in the blistering heat.  
Falls asleep.  
And dreams of a life with more.

[children’s laughter]

3pm. She picks the kids up. Drives to the supermarket.  
Tells the kids: Stay in the car

Stop.  
Enough of that day. Fast-track it back to the highway.  
Long-haul Mack truck blares its horn. Their fright speeds their flight. Turn left at the servo.  
Car hoons past blaring stereo through the dark.  
Back to the carpark.  
This is what happened.

Sun streaks golden across the sky.   
Folding up the dark like last night’s sheets.  
Flinging out stars.

Jessie lags. Crumbling a salt and vinegar path.  
A connect-the-chips edible zig zag.  
But [dog barks] a stray dog gobbles up the Samboy path.

And when mum returns  
Finds only the bag from Crazy Clark’s.  
The car, empty in the carpark.

Meanwhile  
Outside a St Vinnie’s depot, Kids dial triple zero.  
Waiting. Near an overflowing green bin. Dumped with unwanted things. Broken couch. Stuffing torn out. Family of mice nesting in the springs.

Siren sings.  
The baby. Cold and heavy, breath rasping.  
Survives the long night’s journey.  
Changing everything.

And in this ending  
All three are free  
Flying over the city  
On a flight path to Nan’s.

End Game.

A suburban train station.

[Interpretation Statement]

Angela Betzien’s 2007 play, *Hoods*, explores the themes of poverty, trauma, and domestic violence that children living in low socio-economic conditions face on a daily basis. I have made the directorial choice to keep the play’s intended teenage audience. This is demonstrated in my use of contemporary costume, hip-hop-inspired use of physicality, and use of video-game iconography.

The play’s eclectic theatrical style is demonstrated in my use of fragmentary set, soundtrack, and character transformation. I also manipulate the elements of theatre composition of emphasis, contrast, and rhythm throughout my performance.

I have made the directorial decision to make the character of Hoods into a single character, who narrates the story of the abandoned children to the audience while transforming milk crates into the different locations of the story. This emphasises the uncertain nature of the children’s lives to the audience, allowing them to imagine the vivid details of the world suggested by the crates. The design of the crates includes the element of theatre technology, through the use of LED lights. These activate at key moments throughout the monologue to symbolise special effects of a video game, changing colour to emphasis my transformation of character and place, and to stimulate the audience's imagination.

As an actor, I have chosen to use conventions of slam poetry and direct audience address to emphasise the rhythm of the play’s post-dramatic text and the poetry of its heightened language. As the Hoods narrate Kyle’s flight in the first section of the monologue, they adopt the stylised physicality and voice of the different characters, for humourous effect.

This is contrasted when the Hoods narrate the perspective of the children’s mother, and her experience of domestic abuse. My use of stillness and silence heightens the pathos of the moment, and demonstrates to my teenage audience the complexity of escaping from domestic abuse.

The climax of the monologue (and play script) is styled like the end of a video game, directly referencing winning a “Super Mario” level. This emphasises the connection between the children’s positive reimagining of the story’s end, and a player successfully winning a video game. This reinforces my intended meaning to the audience that “No matter your circumstance, if you can imagine it changing, there is always hope for escape.”