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ENDOWMENT

THIS probably is the first exercise you will really enjoy working on. It contains the essence of make-believe, and in its simplest form: how to turn cold water into boiling tea or straight brandy or bitter medicine—even hemlock, if you choose; how to remove makeup without cold cream or soap; how to shave without a blade; how to cook or bake without heat; how to eat mashed potatoes and butter without getting fat; how to remove seemingly sodden clothing without having been in the rain, etc.

Reread Chapter 5, "Sense Memory," and then, for the purpose of the endowment exercise, find circumstances under which you would be dealing with tangible objects which would have to be endowed with properties that should not be real on stage. For example, take a cup of water and endow it with the property of steaming hot coffee. Don't just *think* it's hot but recall how, as you bring it toward you, you pull back slightly from the steam, how you carefully blow and puff across the top of the cup to cool the coffee, how you gently test the rim of the cup with your lips before sipping a few drops and gingerly letting the liquid rest on your tongue for

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a second before allowing it to slide down your throat, how your eyes pull shut as you swallow and your mouth opens and you exhale and then take in air to cool your mouth. Suddenly, that cup of cold water becomes hot coffee and stays that way.

I might not even want to apply real lipstick on stage, because with nervous hands on an opening night it could slip over the edge of my mouth. If there is no room in my stage action for getting cold cream and tissues and fresh powder to repair the damage, I would rather endow a model, plastic lipstick with color and greasiness as I stretch my lips (already made up) and smear it on evenly.

I remember seeing the final dress rehearsal of a play in which a lover was walking out on his mistress. During the course of the action, she had to polish his shoes as one way of preventing his leaving her. The actress was wearing a pearl-gray dress, and the shoe polish was black. As she knelt on the floor, a shoe in one hand, the cloth with polish in the other, the can of black polish on the floor in front of her, she was crying and pleading with him to stay with her. Soon she had globs of polish on her face, hands, and all over her gray costume. It was quite realistic except for one thing. At the end of the scene, the curtain was lowered for only a second and rose again for the next scene which took place a few days later. Her costume and face were still covered with black. In following performances, the inside of the shoe polish can was painted black, without real polish in it, and the actress had found the correct behavior of working with it, the cloth and the shoe, so that not only she but the audience believed she was actually using real polish.

In *The Farewell Supper* by Arthur Schnitzler, I once had to eat an enormous five-course gourmet meal on stage eight times a week. If all the food had been really as specified, I would have been unable to eat it in the time span of my stage

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life, I would have gained ten pounds a week and probably become sick—certainly on matinee days. What was substituted for the food looked like much more than it was, was neither rich, fattening nor too filling. Endowing the food with sweetness, stickiness, quantity, running juices or butter created a relish for eating, slurping and gulping, and brought me a round of applause as I piled into the final dessert of whipped-cream torte (really mounds of yogurt).

Many scenes call for sewing and threading needles. By now, I look forward to seeing them performed by an inexperienced actor because I know I'm in for some comic relief. The panic which sets in as she takes that small needle and fine silk thread, the variations of attempts to get the thread through the tiny eye, how the thread snarls and knots up, and how she finally ends up pretending and pantomiming sewing because she never could get it threaded are quite predictable. If my needle can't be prethreaded and I *must* do it on stage, I will make certain that the needle I use has the fattest eye in show business; if the thread is to be fine silk, I will use sturdy cotton that won't snarl. If it must seem difficult to thread, I will make it so through endowment, and still be able to control the exact second when the thread will readily go through the eye of the needle. Only if it is a part of the plot that the needle *never* gets threaded, may I use the small needle and the fine thread.

Any object which cannot be handled and controlled readily for the purpose to which you want to put it in your selected action becomes a dangerous object. And there are the actually physically dangerous objects—sharp knives, razors, hot irons, broken bottles, liquor, etc. If it is one of these, I don't expect you to rehearse with it and actually hurt yourself to see what you do about it. You undoubtedly *remember* what it was like when you burned or cut yourself,

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or otherwise did damage to yourself or were hurt by someone else.

But wherever an object is not physically dangerous, in the sense discussed above, start experimenting—let's say, with polishing your nails (real nail polish on stage could create a major hazard if it spilled or got on your hands). First, really polish your nails, and then take an empty bottle with its little brush and see if you can reconstruct the behavior of carefully and evenly smoothing the polish on your nails until you find such belief that, by reflex, you will blow on your nails to make sure they are dry, and you will handle the next object delicately for fear of marring the polish.

For your exercise, find at least three tangible objects to endow with physical properties which would otherwise control you. You may also endow them psychologically, but the emphasis should rest on the physical. Avoid pantomiming the actions. By that I mean, if you take a stiff drink, don't use an empty glass and then worry about how far to tip it, or what actual swallowing is like. Fill the glass with water and endow the water with whatever properties you need through sense memory and muscular adjustment.

A student occasionally asks if all three endowed objects should belong together. Obviously, they must belong to your complete and logical set of circumstances. If, for instance, your objective is to try to prepare a splendid meal for your lover, and you have a bad cold at the time, endless ideas for objects to endow will immediately occur to you, connected with the food you are preparing, what you will cook it on and what implements you will need for it, as well as all the objects you may need to control your cold, from vaporizers to nose drops to medicines and chest rubs. Just try to give the objects variation so that all three don't involve tasting, or all three don't have to do with hurting yourself, etc. When you

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have mastered the endowments of the individual objects, give yourself fully to the need for fulfilling your objective with faith in your circumstances in order to avoid simply jumping from one endowed object to the other while checking the accuracy of your execution. When the exercise is ready for presentation, you should have found such trust in your objects that you hardly are aware that they are endowed. They should be wholly there for you.

Any object we deal with, once it has been made particular, will be partially endowed. If I can endow a dull knife with sharpness, I can also endow it further by giving it a history which will dictate even how I pick it up. If the knife was a gift from someone I adore who knows I love to cook—and I am aware that it came from Hammacher Schlemmer's and probably cost about twenty dollars—I will handle it differently than if I physically have to deal with the identical knife and endow it with having been bought at Woolworth's ten years ago, which by accident turned out to be just right and became my favorite old cutting knife.

A rose, which may be wax or plastic on stage, must be not only endowed with the texture, aroma, and thorniness of the real rose in order for me to deal with it with conviction, but will be quite differently dealt with if it is from the favorite plant which I myself grew, or if someone I love gave it to me, or if it is from someone I detest who presented it to me to butter me up. We can and should charge or load each object that we deal with, not only to stimulate our psyche and our senses, but *again* to learn how these elements condition our consequent actions so that when we have to make *selections* for the character's actions in a play, we have discovered all the areas we must draw on to make the selections.

Almost nothing in our character's life *is* what it *is*—but we must make it so! We *endow* the given circumstances, our own character, our relationship to others in the play, the place,

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each object we deal with, including the clothes we wear. All must be endowed with the physical, psychological or emotional properties which we want in order to send us richly into action from moment to moment.

And so the example of turning an apple into an onion can be a beginning of comprehending that by turning one thing into another, or by supplying missing realities, actions may become sharper than usual, and that reality can be heightened instead of ordinary. It becomes a distilled reality, and that is what I love about it.

Now, you are halfway through the exercises. If you have been actually rehearsing and presenting them for criticism, not just reading about them, you may have discovered their interesting by-products. By now, you are undoubtedly not just rehearsing during the hours you set aside for the exercises, but are "rehearsing" off and on every day. I can't open an oven door without noting how my head pulls back at an angle from the heat. If I'm making a telephone call, a part of me is marking the fourth wall I'm using. Secondary and reflex behavior becomes momentarily conscious. I'm aware of what brought me into a room or out into the street. And the most astounding part of it all is that I don't feel a bit less spontaneous about my behavior. The purpose in establishing habits of self-observation, in discovering the endless variations of behavior which occur from day to day is *not* to reproduce this behavior mechanically *but . . .*

1. To find what inner and outer objects I get involved with under the given circumstances, and why I deal with them.
2. To learn that I do release my psychological and emotional life physically by contacting something else.

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3. To discover how my sense of identity changes hourly, depending on needs, surroundings and circumstances, and that these variations in sense of self can be usable for character.
4. To realize what elements are essential in order to bring about two minutes of existence.

I am starting to fill a warehouse for future use in the parts I still hope to play.

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TALKING TO YOURSELF

THE MONOLOGUE—that old fossil—which has appeared in so many different forms in dramatic literature has always depended on the form that was favored at the time. From century to century, it has adjusted or been cut to fit a current mode of the theater. Whatever its form, it is and has always been a character talking to himself out loud, or to absent characters, or to objects surrounding him at a given time in a given place for a specific reason at a moment of crisis. Whether the emphasis be on the naturalistic or one of selective realism, it is always dependent on whether the relevant content is emotional, psychological, philosophical, poetical, or an amalgam of more than one. Whether the monologue deals with plot or character problems (even if by the author's graces the character is allowed in his eloquence to know more about himself than he actually might in life), or even if the character talks aloud to himself because he is insane, a monologue will always be words representing the character's thoughts or a part of his thoughts. Sometimes it is even the actor's job to persuade himself—and the audience—that these words, or some of them, might actually be inaudible in spite