

Impro

Most students haven't realised – till I show them – how inefficient such techniques are. The idea that a teacher should be interested in such things is, unfortunately, novel to them. I also explain strategies like sitting on the end of the row, and how it isolates you from the group, and body positions that prevent absorption (like the 'lit-crit' postures which keep the user 'detached' and 'objective').

In exchange for accepting the blame for failure, I ask the students to set themselves up in such a way that they'll learn as quickly as possible. I'm teaching spontaneity, and therefore I tell them that they mustn't try to control the future, or to 'win'; and that they're to have an empty head and just watch. When it's their turn to take part they're to come out and just do what they're asked to, and see *what happens*. It's this decision not to try and control the future which allows the students to be spontaneous.

If I'm playing with my three-year-old son and I smack him, he looks at me for signals that will turn the sensation into either warmth or pain. A very gentle smack that he perceives as 'serious' will have him howling in agony. A hard 'play' slap may make him laugh. When I want to work and he wants me to continue playing he will give very strong 'I am playing' signals in an attempt to pull me back into his game. All people relate to each other in this way but most teachers are afraid to give 'I am playing' signals to their students. If they would, their work would become a constant pleasure.

Note

1. If you have trouble understanding this section, it may be because you're a conceptualiser, rather than a visualiser. William Grey Walter, in *The Living Brain* (Penguin, 1963) calculated that one in six of us are conceptualisers (actually in my view there is a far smaller proportion of conceptualisers among drama students).

I have a simple way to telling if people are visualisers. I ask them to describe the furniture in a room they're familiar with. Visualisers move their eyes as if 'seeing' each object as they name it. Conceptualisers look in one direction as if reading off a list.

Galton investigated mental imagery at the beginning of the century, and found that the more educated the person, the more likely he was to say that mental imagery was unimportant, or even that it didn't exist.

An exercise: fix your eyes on some object, and attend to something at the periphery of your vision. You can see what you're attending to, but actually your mind is assembling the object from relatively little information. Now look directly, and observe the difference. This is one way of tricking the mind out of its habitual dulling of the world.

STATUS

1 The See-saw

When I began teaching at the Royal Court Theatre Studio (1963), I noticed that the actors couldn't reproduce 'ordinary' conversation. They said 'talky scenes are dull', but the conversations they acted out were nothing like those I overheard in life. For some weeks I experimented with scenes in which two 'strangers' met and interacted, and I tried saying 'No jokes', and 'Don't try to be clever', but the work remained unconvincing. They had no way to mark time and allow situations to develop, they were forever striving to latch on to 'interesting' ideas. If casual conversations really were motiveless, and operated by chance, why was it impossible to reproduce them at the studio?

I was preoccupied with this problem when I saw the Moscow Art's production of *The Cherry Orchard*. Everyone on stage seemed to have chosen the *strongest* possible motives for each action – no doubt the production had been 'improved' in the decades since Stainslavsky directed it. The effect was 'theatrical' but not like life as I knew it. I asked myself for the first time what were the *weakest* possible motives, the motives that the characters I was watching might really have had. When I returned to the studio I set the first of my status exercises.

'Try to get your status just a little above or below your partner's,' I said, and I insisted that the gap should be minimal. The actors seemed to know exactly what I meant and the work was transformed. The scenes became 'authentic', and actors seemed marvellously observant. Suddenly we understood that every inflection and movement implies a status, and that no action is due to chance, or really 'motiveless'. It was hysterically funny, but at the same time very alarming. All our secret manoeuvrings were exposed. If someone asked a question we didn't bother to answer it, we concentrated on why it had been asked. No one could make an 'innocuous' remark without everyone instantly grasping what lay behind it. Normally we are 'forbidden' to see status transactions except when there's a conflict. In reality status transactions continue all the time. In the park we'll notice the ducks squabbling, but not how carefully they keep their distances when they are not.

Here's a conversation quoted by W. R. Bion (*Experience in Groups*, Tavistock Publications, 1968) which he gives as an example of a group not getting anywhere while apparently being friendly. The remarks on the status interactions are mine.

MRS X: I had a nasty turn last week. I was standing in a queue waiting for my turn to go into the cinema when I felt ever so queer. Really, I thought I should faint or something.

[Mrs X is attempting to raise her status by having an interesting medical problem. Mrs Y immediately outdoes her.]

MRS Y: You're lucky to have been going to a cinema. If I thought I could go to a cinema I should think I had nothing to complain of at all.

[Mrs Z now blocks Mrs Y.]

MRS Z: I know what Mrs X means. I feel just like that myself, only I should have had to leave the queue.

[Mrs Z is very talented in that she supports Mrs X against Mrs Y while at the same time claiming to be more worthy of interest, her condition more severe. Mr A now intervenes to lower them all by making their condition seem very ordinary.]

MR A: Have you tried stooping down? That makes the blood come back to your head. I expect you were feeling faint. [Mrs X defends herself.]

MRS X: It's not really faint.

MRS Y: I always find it does a lot of good to try exercises. I don't know if that's what Mr A means.

[She seems to be joining forces with Mr A, but implies that he was unable to say what he meant. She doesn't say 'Is that what you mean?' but protects herself by her typically high-status circumlocution. Mrs Z now lowers everybody, and immediately lowers herself to avoid counterattack.]

MRS Z: I think you have to use your will-power. That's what worries me - I haven't got any.

[Mr B then intervenes, I suspect in a low-status way, or rather trying to be high-status but failing. It's impossible to be sure from just the words.]

MR B: I had something similar happen to me last week, only I wasn't standing in a queue. I was sitting at home quietly when ...

[Mr C demolishes him.]

MR C: You were lucky to be sitting at home quietly. If I was able to do that I shouldn't think I had anything to grumble about. If you can't sit at home why don't you go to the cinema or something?

Bion says that the prevailing atmosphere was of good temper and helpfulness. He adds that 'A suspicion grows in my mind, that there is no hope whatever of expecting co-operation from this group.' Fair enough. What he had is a group where everyone attacks the status of everyone else while pretending to be friendly. If he taught them to play status transactions as *games* then the feeling within the group would improve. A lot of laughter would have been released, and the group might have flipped over from acting as a competitive group into acting as a co-operative one. It's worth noting how much talent is locked away inside these apparently banal people.

We've all observed different kinds of teachers, so if I describe three types of status players commonly found in the teaching profession you may find that you already know exactly what I mean.

I remember one teacher, whom we liked but who couldn't keep discipline. The Headmaster made it obvious that he wanted to fire him, and we decided we'd better behave. Next lesson we sat in a spooky silence for about five minutes, and then one by one we began to fool about - boys jumping from table to table, acetylene-gas exploding in the sink, and so on. Finally, our teacher was given an excellent reference just to get rid of him, and he landed a headmastership at the other end of the county. We were left with the paradox that our behaviour had nothing to do with our conscious intention.

Another teacher, who was generally disliked, never punished and yet exerted a ruthless discipline. In the street he walked with fixity of purpose, striding along and stabbing people with his eyes. Without punishing, or making threats, he filled us with terror. We discussed with awe how terrible life must be for his own children.

A third teacher, who was much loved, never punished but kept excellent discipline, while remaining very human. He would joke with us, and then impose a mysterious stillness. In the street he looked upright, but relaxed, and he smiled easily.

I thought about these teachers a lot, but I couldn't understand the forces operating on us. I would now say that the incompetent teacher was a low-status player: he twitched, he made many unnecessary movements, he went

red at the slightest annoyance, and he always seemed like an intruder in the classroom. The one who filled us with terror was a compulsive high-status player. The third was a status expert, raising and lowering his status with great skill. The pleasure attached to misbehaving comes partly from the status changes you make in your teacher. All those jokes on teacher are to make him drop in status. The third teacher could cope easily with any situation by changing his status first.

Status is a confusing term unless it's understood as something one *does*. You may be low in social status, but play high, and vice versa. For example:

TRAMP: 'Ere! Where are you going?

DUCHESS: I'm sorry, I didn't quite catch . . .

TRAMP: Are you deaf as well as blind?

Audiences enjoy a contrast between the status played and the social status. We always like it when a tramp is mistaken for the boss, or the boss for a tramp. Hence plays like *The Inspector General*. Chaplin liked to play the person at the bottom of the hierarchy and then lower everyone.

I should really talk about dominance and submission, but I'd create a resistance. Students who will agree readily to raising or lowering their status may object if asked to 'dominate' or 'submit'.

Status seems to me to be a useful term, providing the difference between the status you are and the status you play is understood.

As soon as I introduced the status work at the Studio, we found that people will play one status while convinced that they are playing the opposite. This obviously makes for very bad social 'meshing' – as in Bion's therapy group – and many of us had to revise our whole idea of ourselves. In my own case I was astounded to find that when I thought I was being friendly, I was actually being hostile! If someone had said 'I like your play', I would have said 'Oh, it's not up to much, perceiving myself as 'charmingly modest'. In reality I would have been implying that my admirer had bad taste. I experience the opposite situation when people come up, looking friendly and supportive, and say, 'We did enjoy the end of Act One', leaving me to wonder what was wrong with the rest.

I ask a student to lower his status during a scene, and he enters and says:

A: What are you reading?

B: *War and Peace*.

A: Ah! That's my favourite book!

The class laugh and A stops in amazement. I had told him to lower his status during the scene, and he doesn't see what's gone wrong.

I ask him to try it again and suggest a different line of dialogue.

A: What are you reading?

B: *War and Peace*.

A: I've always wanted to read that.

A now experiences the difference, and realises that he was originally claiming 'cultural superiority' by implying that he had read this immense work many times. If he'd understood this he could have corrected the error.

A: Ah! That's my favourite book.

B: Really?

A: Oh yes. Of course I only look at the pictures . . .

A further early discovery was that there was no way to be neutral. The 'Good morning' that might be experienced as lowering by the Manager, might be experienced as raising by the bank clerk. The messages are modified by the receivers.

You can see people trying to be neutral in group photographs. They pose with arms folded or close to their sides as if to say 'Look! I'm not claiming any more space than I'm entitled to', and they hold themselves very straight as if saying 'But I'm not submissive either!' If someone points a camera at you you're in danger of having your status exposed, so you either clown about, or become deliberately unexpressive. In formal group photographs it's normal to see people guarding their status. You get quite different effects when people don't know they're being photographed.

If status can't even be got rid of, then what happens between friends? Many people will maintain that we don't play status transactions with our friends, and yet every movement, every inflection of the voice implies a status. My answer is that acquaintances become friends when they *agree* to play status games together. If I take an acquaintance an early morning cup of tea I might say 'Did you have a good night?' or something equally 'neutral', the status being established by voice and posture and eye contact and so on. If I take a cup of tea to a friend then I may say 'Get up, you old cow', or 'Your Highness's tea', pretending to raise or lower status. Once students understand that they already play status games with their friends, then they realise that they already know most of the status games I'm trying to teach them.

SGANARELLE: [*Lowers Martine.*] A plague on you, you worthless hussy!
 MARTINE: [*Lowers her wedding day.*] A curse on the day and hour when I took it into my head to go and say 'I will'!
 SGANARELLE: [*Lowers notary.*] And a curse on the cuckold of a notary who made me sign my name to my own ruin.
 MARTINE: [*Raises herself.*] A lot of reason you have to complain, I must say! You ought to thank Heaven every minute of your life that you have me for your wife. Do you think you deserved to marry a woman like me?
 [*And so on.*]
 (*The Misanthrope and other plays, translated by John Wood, Penguin, 1959.*)

Most comedy works on the see-saw principle. A comedian is someone paid to lower his own or other people's status. I remember some of Ken Dodd's patter which went something like this: 'I got up this morning and had my bath . . . standing up in the sink . . .' (Laugh from audience.) . . . and then I lay down to dry off - on the draining-board . . .' (Laughter.) . . . and then my father came in and said "Who skinned this rabbit?" (Laughter.) While he describes himself in this pathetic way he leaps about, and expresses manic happiness, thus absolving the audience of the need to pity him. We want people to be very low-status, but we don't want to feel sympathy for them - slaves are always supposed to sing at their work.

One way to understand status transactions is to examine the comic strips, the 'funnies'. Most are based on very simple status transactions, and it's interesting to observe the postures of the characters, and the changes in status between the first and last frames.

Another way is to examine jokes, and analyse their status transactions. For example:

CUSTOMER: 'Ere, there's a cockroach in the loo!

BARMAID: Well you'll have to wait till he's finished, won't you?

Or again:

A: Who's that fat noisy old bag?

B: That's my wife.

B: Oh, I'm sorry . . .

A: You're sorry! How do you think I feel?

We soon discovered the 'see-saw' principle: 'I go up and you go down.' Walk into a dressing-room and say 'I got the part' and everyone will congratulate you, but will feel lowered. Say 'They said I was too old' and people commiserate, but cheer up perceptibly. Kings and great lords used to surround themselves with dwarfs and cripples so that they could rise by the contrast. Some modern celebrities do the same. The exception to this see-saw principle comes when you identify with the person being raised or lowered, when you sit on his end of the see-saw, so to speak. If you claim status because you know some famous person, then you'll feel raised when they are: similarly, an ardent royalist won't want to see the Queen fall off her horse. When we tell people nice things about ourselves this is usually a little like kicking them. People really want to be told things to our discredit in such a way that they don't have to feel sympathy. Low-status players save up little tit-bits involving their own discomfiture with which to amuse and placate other people.

If I'm trying to lower my end of the see-saw, and my mind blocks, I can always switch to raising the other end. That is, I can achieve a similar effect by saying 'I smell beautiful' as 'You stink'. I therefore teach actors to switch between raising themselves and lowering their partners in alternate sentences; and vice versa. Good playwrights also add variety in this way. For example, look at the opening of Molière's *A Doctor in Spite of Himself*. The remarks on status are mine.

SGANARELLE: [*Raises himself.*] No, I tell you I'll have nothing to do with it and it's for me to say, I'm the master.

MARTINE: [*Lowers Sganarelle, raises herself.*] And I'm telling you that I'll have you do as I want. I didn't marry you to put up with your nonsensical goings-on.

SGANARELLE: [*Lowers Martine.*] Oh! The misery of married life! How right Aristotle was when he said wives were the very devil!

MARTINE: [*Lowers Sganarelle and Aristotle.*] Just listen to the clever fellow - him and his blockhead of an Aristotle!

SGANARELLE: [*Raises himself.*] Yes, I'm a clever fellow all right! Produce me a woodcutter who can argue and hold forth like me, a man who has served six years with a famous physician and had his Latin grammar off by heart since infancy!

MARTINE: [*Lowers Sganarelle.*] A plague on the idiot!

2 Comedy and Tragedy

In his essay on laughter Bergson maintained that the man-falling-on-a-banana-skin joke was funny because the victim had suddenly been forced into acting like an automaton. He wrote: 'Through lack of elasticity, through absent-mindedness, and a kind of physical obstinacy: *as a result, in fact, of rigidity or of momentum*, the muscles continued to perform the same movement when the circumstances of the case called for something else. This is the reason for the man's fall, and also of the people's laughter.' Later in the same essay he says: 'What is essentially laughable is what is done automatically.'

In my view the man who falls on the banana skin is funny only if he loses status, and if we don't have sympathy with him. If my poor old blind grandfather falls over I'll rush up and help him to his feet. If he's really hurt I may be appalled. If Nixon had slipped up on the White House steps many people would have found it hysterical. If Bergson had been right then we would laugh at a drowning man, and grand military parades would have the crowds rocking with merriment. A Japanese regiment is said to have masturbated by numbers in a football stadium as an insult to the population of Nanking, but I don't suppose it was funny at the time. Chaplin being sucked into the machine is funny because his style absolves us of the need for sympathy.

Tragedy also works on the see-saw principle: its subject is the ousting of a high-status animal from the pack. Super-intelligent wolves might have invented this form of theatre, and the lupine Oedipus would play high status at all times. Even when he was being led into the wilderness he wouldn't whine, and he'd keep his tail up. If he crumbled into low-status posture and voice the audience wouldn't get the necessary catharsis. The effect wouldn't be tragic, but pathetic. Even criminals about to be executed were supposed to make a 'good end', i.e. to play high status. When the executioner asked Raleigh if he wouldn't rather face the light of the dawn he said something like 'What matter how the head lie, if the heart be right', which is still remembered.

When a very high-status person is wiped out, everyone feels pleasure as they experience the feeling of moving up a step. This is why tragedy has always been concerned with kings and princes, and why we have a special high-status style for playing tragedy. I've seen a misguided Faustus writhing on the floor at the end of the play, which is bad for the verse, and pretty ineffective. Terrible things can happen to the high-status animal, he can

poke his eyes out with his wife's brooch, but he must never look as if he could accept a position lower in the pecking order. He has to be ejected from it.

Tragedy is obviously related to sacrifice. Two things strike me about reports of sacrifices: one is that the crowd get more and more tense, and then are relaxed and happy at the moment of death; the other is that the victim is raised in status before being sacrificed. The best goat is chosen, and it's groomed, and magnificently decorated. A human sacrifice might be pampered for months, and then dressed in fine clothes, and rehearsed in his role at the centre of the great ceremony. Elements of this can be seen in the Christ story (the robe, the crown of thorns, and even the eating of the 'body'). A sacrifice has to be endowed with high status or the magic doesn't work.

3 Teaching Status

Social animals have inbuilt rules which prevent them killing each other for food, mates, and so on. Such animals confront each other, and sometimes fight, until a hierarchy is established, after which there is no fighting unless an attempt is being made to change the 'pecking order'. This system is found in animals as diverse as human beings, chickens, and woodlice. I've known about this ever since I was given a book about social dominance in kittiwake colonies, yet I hadn't immediately thought of applying this information to actor training. This is because normal people are inhibited from seeing that no action, sound, or movement is innocent of purpose. Many psychologists have noted how uncannily perceptive some schizophrenics are. I think that their madness must have opened their eyes to things that 'normal' people are trained to ignore.

In animals the pattern of eye contacts often establishes dominance. A stare is often interpreted as an aggressive act – hence the dangers of looking at gorillas through binoculars. Visitors to zoos feel dominant when they can outstare the animals. I suggest you try the opposite with zoo animals: break eye contact and then glance back for a moment. Polar bears may suddenly see you as 'food'. Owls cheer up perceptibly.

Some people dispute that the held eye contact between 'strangers' is dominant. Kenneth Strongman wrote in the March 1970 issues of *Science Journal*: 'At the time we thought ourselves justified in concluding that a dominance structure of submission from eye contact exists and that this

tends to approach hierarchy, particularly when the focus is on initial eye contact. Our reason for considering it to be concerned with dominance was based on a statement made by Argyle and Dean, who suggested that if A wants to dominate B he stares at him appropriately; B can accept this with a submissive expression or by looking away, or can challenge and outstare. However, S. E. Poppleton, a research student at Exeter, has since shown that the relationship between eye-glance submission hierarchies and an independent measure of dominance (provided by Catell's 16PF personality inventory) is an inverse one. Thus he who looks away first is the more dominant.

One might contrast this with other reports, like that of an experiment at Stanford University where it was found that drivers who had been stared at left traffic lights appreciably faster. Such disagreements indicate the difficulty of actually perceiving status transactions. In my view, breaking eye contact can be high status so long as you don't immediately glance back for a fraction of a second. If you ignore someone your status rises, if you feel impelled to look back then it falls. It's as if the proper state of human beings is high, but that we modify ourselves to avoid conflicts. Posture experts (like Mathias Alexander) teach high-status postures as 'correct'. It's only to be expected that status is established not by staring, but by the reaction to staring. Thus dark glasses raise status because we can't see the submission of the eyes.

I minimise 'status resistance' from my students by getting them to experience various status sensations *before* I discuss the implications, or even introduce the term. I might ask them to say something nice to the person beside them, and then to say something nasty. This releases a lot of laughter, and they are surprised to find that they often achieve the wrong effect. (Some people never really say anything nice, and others never say anything really nasty, but they won't realise this.)

I ask a group to mill about and say 'hallo' to each other. They feel very awkward, because the situation isn't *real*. They don't know what status they should be playing. I then get some of the group to hold all eye contacts for a couple of seconds, while the others try to make and then break eye contacts and then immediately glance back for a moment. The group suddenly looks more like a 'real' group, in that some people become dominant, and others submissive. Those who hold eye contacts report that they feel powerful – and actually look powerful. Those who break eye contact and glance back 'feel' feeble, and look it. The students *like* doing this, and are interested, and puzzled by the strength of the sensations.

I might then begin to insert a tentative 'er' at the beginning of each of my sentences, and ask the group if they detect any change in me. They say that I look 'helpless' and 'weak' but they can't, interestingly enough, say what I'm doing that's different. I don't normally begin every sentence with 'er', so it should be very obvious. Then I move the 'er' into the middle of sentences, and they say that they perceive me as becoming a little stronger. If I make the 'er' longer, and move it back to the beginning of sentences, then they say I look more important, more confident. When I explain what I am doing, and let them experiment, they're amazed at the different feelings the length and displacement of the 'ers' give them. They are also surprised that it's difficult to get some people to use a short 'er'. There wouldn't seem to be any problem in putting an 'er' lasting a fraction of a second at the beginning of each sentence, but many people unconsciously resist. They say 'urn', or they elongate the sound. These are people who cling to their self-importance. The short 'er' is an invitation for people to interrupt you; the long 'er' says 'Don't interrupt me, even though I haven't thought what to say yet.'

Again I change my behaviour and become authoritative. I ask them what I've done to create this change in my relation with them, and whatever they guess to be the reason – 'You're holding eye contact', 'You're sitting straighter' – I stop doing, yet the effect continues. Finally I explain that I'm keeping my head still whenever I speak, and that this produces great change in the way I perceive myself and am perceived by others. I suggest you try it now with anyone you're with. Some people find it impossible to speak with a still head, and more curiously, some students maintain that it's still while they're actually jerking it about. I let such students practise in front of a mirror, or I use videotape. Actors needing authority – tragic heroes and so on – have to learn this still head trick. You can talk and waggle your head about if you play the gravedigger, but not if you play Hamlet. Officers are trained not to move the head while issuing commands.

My belief (at this moment) is that people have a preferred status; that they like to be low, or high, and that they try to manoeuvre themselves into the preferred positions. A person who plays high status is saying 'Don't come near me, I bite.' Someone who plays low status is saying 'Don't bite me, I'm not worth the trouble.' In either case the status played is a defence, and it'll usually work. It's very likely that you will increasingly be conditioned into playing the status that you've found an effective defence. You become a status *specialist*, very good at playing one status, but not very happy or competent at playing the other. Asked to play the 'wrong' status, you'll feel 'undefended'.

I reassure my students, and encourage them, and let them have conversations together, trying out different ways of changing their status. One student might try moving very smoothly (high status) while his partner moves jerkily (low status).¹ One might keep putting his hands near his face while he speaks, and the other might try keeping his hands away from his face. One might try holding his toes pointing inwards (low status), while one sits back and spreads himself (high status).

These are just tricks in order to get the students to experience status changes. If I speak with a still head, then I'll do many other high-status things quite automatically. I'll speak in complete sentences, I'll hold eye contact. I'll move more smoothly, and occupy more 'space'. If I talk with my toes pointing inwards I'm more likely to give a hesitant little 'er' before each sentence, and I'll smile with my teeth covering my bottom lip, and I'll sound a little breathless, and so on. We were amazed to find that apparently unrelated things could so strongly influence each other; it didn't seem reasonable that the position of the feet could influence sentence structure and eye contact, but it is so.

Once students have understood the concepts, and have been coaxed into experiencing the two states, then I get them to play scenes in which: (1) both lower status; (2) both raise status; (3) one raises while the other lowers; (4) the status is reversed during the scene.

I insist that they have to get their status just a *little* above or below their partner's. This ensures that they really 'see' their partner; as they have exactly to relate their behaviour to his. The automatic status skills then 'lock on to' the other actor, and the students are transformed into observant, and apparently very experienced improvisers. Of course, they will have been playing status whenever they improvised, but it would be usually a personal status, not the status of a character. They would be relating to the problem of succeeding in the eyes of the *audience*. These status exercises reproduce on the stage exactly the effects of real life, in which moment by moment each person adjusts his status up or down a fraction.

When actors are reversing status during a scene it's good to make them grade the transitions as smoothly as possible. I tell them that if I took a photograph every five seconds, I'd like to be able to arrange the prints in order just by the status shown. It's easy to reverse status in one jump. Learning to grade it delicately from moment to moment increases the control of the actor. The audience will always be held when a status is being modified.

It isn't necessary for an actor to achieve the status he's trying to play in order to interest an audience. To see someone trying to be high, and failing, is just as delightful as watching him succeed.

Here are some notes made by students who had just been introduced to status work.

'The using of different types of "er" found me swinging unavoidably from feeling now inferior, now superior, then inferior again. I found myself crossing my arms, fidgeting, walking with my hands in my pockets - all movements unnatural to me. I find myself suddenly freezing my body in order to check up on my status.'

'Nothing has been done in class that I didn't believe or "know". But I couldn't have stated it.'

'During that scene with Judith in which she at first touched her head all the time, and then gradually stopped doing it, I couldn't define the change in her movements, and yet for some reason my attitude changed towards her. When she touched her head I tried to be more helpful, reassuring, whereas once she stopped, I felt more distant and businesslike - also a bit more challenged - whereas previously I'd felt nothing but sympathy.'

'I've often been told that an actor should be aware of his body but I didn't understand this until I tried talking with my head still.'

'The most interesting revelation to me was that every time I spoke to someone I could tell if I felt submissive or the opposite. I then tried to play status games in secret with people I knew. Some people I thought I knew very well I wouldn't dare try it with. Other relatively new friends were easy to play status games with.'

'Sense of domination when I hold eye contact. Almost a pride in being able to look at someone else and have them look away. Looking away and back - felt persecuted. As if everyone was trying to crush me underfoot.'

'Status - clothes not important. I was walking to the shower with only a towel over my shoulder when I met a fully dressed student who took on a very low-status look and allowed me to pass on my way.'

'Every time I speak to someone I can now tell if I'm submissive or not.'

'I've always thought that the man I should like to marry should be smarter than me; someone I could look up to and respect. Well, my boyfriend is now smarter than me, and I usually respect his knowledge, but often I find his high status a nuisance. Perhaps I should seek someone I consider I'm on the same level with?'

'I felt the dominant figure in the conversation and proceeded to try and subjugate myself to her whims. I did this by the "touch the head and face" method. What happened here is that, while prior to this move I had done most of the talking and directed the conversation, after this . . . I was hard put to get a word in edgeways.'