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Yesterday, I observed a portion of a workshop of Ken Urban's new play, *The Immortals*. This was my first real exposure to workshopping. In my previous playwriting class, we had done readings of our drafts, but nothing like what took place in yesterday's workshop. In class, we would read the draft, only stopping if a real error occurred (like a missed line). The purpose of our in class readings is for the playwright to hear how the play flows and the rest of the class to get a sense of the play to give criticism. The workshop entailed much more—it served those purposes, but for the playwright, it was mostly about making the play better then and there, and for the actors, it was about learning character motivations and how to interpret the dialogue on the page. The director and dramaturg facilitate these functions.

During the portion of the workshop I observed, the team covered three different scenes. They would start at the beginning of the scene, the director read the stage directions, and then the actors would begin, reading and acting their lines—and I mean *really* acting. One of the things that impressed me most was the amount of eye contact (or lack thereof) the actors had with each other while reading their lines. They didn't have the script memorized, but they shared affectionate looks, or avoided eye contact in shame, as required by the script. This would never happen in our in class readings—people try to perform vocally, but that's about the limit of our collective acting abilities. This was a world away, and it should be! The actors are learning how to play their characters, so even though they are restricted to a chair, they should still be acting, especially because the director needs to see what will work and what won't. The process, to me, was quite impressive.

The workshop also served as a testing process, seeing what in the play worked and what didn't. The changes mostly consisted of cutting—lots and lots of cutting. I had heard that plays got shorter through the workshopping process, but you don't believe it until you see pages of dialogues getting thrown out, and the most surprising thing was that the cuts *always* seemed to work—I think this came down to the actors capturing future dialogue in their performance, making it redundant; the cut dialogue probably helped the actors understand their character, which in turn, caused the dialogue to be superfluous. I'm somewhat worried for what my play will lose in its workshopping phase, but rationally, I know it's all part of the process, and it ultimately what is best for the play. If Ken had that concern during the workshop, he hid it well—he was more than happy to cut large sections of dialogue out, showing no deference to his own work. That alone was impressive.

Despite these reservations, I am excited for the workshop of my draft. I can't wait to see it come to life, performed by professional actors, and watch it improve in real time.