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The role of the merchant in Bertolt Brecht's *The Exception and the Rule*: a production thesis in acting

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THE ROLE OF THE MERCHANT IN BERTOLT BRECHT'S
THE EXCEPTION AND THE RULE:
A PRODUCTION THESIS IN ACTING

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts

in

The Department of Theatre

by
Mark Jaynes
B.A., Western Michigan University, 2004
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To acknowledge everyone I want to acknowledge would constitute an entire thesis itself and still I'd surely forget too many. I've probably already thanked those people to their faces anyway. If I haven't I will.

So I will instead focus on acknowledgments for this production solely. Firstly, thanks John Dennis. Thank you to my friends, my classmates, my ensemble: Kesha, Reuben, Derek, Ron, Anna, and Nikki. To my friends who rounded out the cast of the show, thanks. To anyone whose influence I put to practical use during the performance of the show, I thank you, namely Annette, Joan, Christine, John, Mark, Leon and Bertolt.

Then, broadly, to those of you who have enriched my life over the past three years. I owe you more than you know. When I think of you, I know that life is fantastic.

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ABSTRACT

The role of the Merchant in Bertolt Brecht's *The Exception and the Rule* was selected as the topic of this production thesis in acting to be submitted unto the Graduate School of Louisiana State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with the Master of Fine Arts degree in Theatre. The thesis includes an introduction, a chapter on preparation for the role, a chapter on implementation of the role, a physical score and a conclusion. It details the author's approach to the role of the Merchant in performance, as well as to the performance theories of Bertolt Brecht himself.

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Prior to working on *The Exception and the Rule*, I had not had much exposure to the work of Bertolt Brecht. I knew he had a large body of theatrical, poetic, and theoretical work. But the nature of that body of work was unknown to me. I knew that a lot of the theatre artists I admired had considered Brecht an influence. I was drawn to work that could be considered, in the truest sense, “Brechtian” (whatever that meant). More appropriately, I always shied away from those theories and methods against which, I later found out, Brecht focused his theories. Consciously or unconsciously I have always felt at least a little bit of resistance to the school of acting born from the early work of Stanislavsky. Ironic, perhaps, or maybe silly, considering it is the preferred method taught in most theatre institutions, where I have spent the past seven years of my life. I am not in complete opposition to it. But I have always had a sense that it wasn’t enough, that there was something more.

I get it, this method of behaving realistically on stage. If that is indeed my goal there is probably no better means of achieving it, but acting in a theatre is more than what this method can provide. It’s bigger than life. It is, to me, more real than realistic behavior—a heightened experience. I want a deeper, clearer, more specific means of acting.

I do agree with many aspects of this method. Truth is at the heart of everything we do in the theatre. To achieve our ends, we must focus and concentrate. We must always work to make sure we have as relaxed, free, and expressive an instrument as possible. It is certainly important that action has a central role in theatre. One of my

favorite artists, Jeff Magnum, said, “action and reaction are the closest things to truth in the universe.” I agree. This is very much a part of Stanislavsky’s work.

There are also things, however, with which I disagree. The codified way of performing action on stage, at least in my experience, leads to stasis. In implementing this method, I tend to get more focused on doing justice to my written actor-work than acting and reacting. It occurs to me that this method of action/tactic analysis is a means to just that: analysis. It is a great tool to figuring out who the characters are, and how they operate psychologically (more on that soon), but actual practical application is rather stifling.

On playing truly, Stanislavsky says, one must “be right, logical, coherent, to think, strive, feel and act in unison with your role,” and “must fit his own human qualities to the life of this other person and pour into it all of his own soul. The fundamental aim of our art is the creation of this inner life of a human spirit, and its expression in an artistic form.” To this extent, he also argues, “the roles for which you haven’t the appropriate feelings are those you will never play well.” I agree that an actor must pour into a role all of his own soul. Other than that, however, I whole-heartedly disagree with these principles. I believe that, as Hornby puts it, one of “the fundamental experience(s) of acting is to escape the limitations of yourself.” To me, a great actor has a great imagination, and a body and voice that can turn that imagination into experience. If this is true, the actor can play outside her own logic, coherence, cultural standards, and feelings, and achieve something bigger, deeper, *more real*, than herself. She can mine the vitality of humanity outside the confines of individual expression.

The separation of the actor and the audience is something that has never boded well with me. I have always been interested in exploring the actor-audience relationship. The idea of the fourth wall cuts off an infinite realm of possibilities. Not only that, it is also pretentious and elitist. Employing what Wagner started with turning the lights out in the theatre and making the audience sit in the dark, Stanislavsky went further, saying his company, the Moscow Art Theatre, had to “teach this new spectator how to sit quietly, how not to talk, how to come into the theatre at the proper time, not to smoke, not to eat nuts in public, not to bring food into the theatre and eat it there, to dress in his best so as to fit more into the atmosphere of beauty that was worshipped in the theatre.” I thank him for his appreciation of this beauty, but people come to the theatre to have human experiences. Whatever manifestations those experiences take, that is the beauty. As an actor, I find inspiration from this “black hole,” as Stanislavsky once referred to it, rather than distraction.

All this pontification is to say that I was not wholly satisfied with Stanislavsky as a creator of a system of performance or as a guru of the theatre. Jump to the fall semester of 2006. John Dennis (JD) tells us he will direct my class in a little-produced one-act play by Bertolt Brecht called *The Exception and the Rule*. The only previous experience I had with Brecht was reading his play *Mother Courage and Her Children* several years ago. I thought it dreadfully boring. Yet, a lot of artists I considered influential upon my work cited Brecht as an influence on theirs. I also trusted JD, and he himself had expressed an appreciation for the man and his work. I had a broad, over-simplified idea of what Brecht might have thought, that of revealing the artifice of the theatre, including performance but I didn't know why or how. I was aware of the cliché that making the

choice to make something “Brechtian” was tantamount to just being lazy. I was also aware that this cliché was a cliché. I put no stock in it. I was aware, as well, that Stanislavsky and Brecht stood, in terms of performance theory, at the opposite ends of the spectrum. This turned out to be less true than had been impressed upon me.

At this point, my curiosities had been piqued. During this semester I had been taking an independent study with PhD Professor John Fletcher loosely based around devising theatrical work. John would give me material to read and once a week we would meet to discuss it. My interest was in creating a piece about J. Robert Oppenheimer. John recommended I read Bertolt Brecht’s *Life of Galileo*. I did and loved it. Coupled with this edition of the play was an article called “Five Difficulties of Writing the Truth.” This article had a tremendous impact on me. It was inspiring and provoking, and made so much sense, especially in a time so politically dark as the fall of ‘06. A president and administration, who had demonstrated so clearly their incompetence and disregard for humanity during Hurricane Katrina and the Iraq War, was in power, its party still controlling both the House and Senate. Popular approval was very low, but that did not stop this mandate-driven, rogue president from doing whatever he needed for his own personal gain and at the expense of anyone who was expendable. Brecht’s essay reveals the methods of writing the truth about an oppressive regime while living under one. It is eloquent, smart, upsetting, and most of all, truthful. The political nature of Brecht’s work, against the backdrop of our present state of the union in America, and our imperialist conquest of oil in the Middle East was a major factor in JD’s choosing to produce Brecht’s *Exception*.

I had gained a perspective, and a new inspiration for this project and why we were doing it at this time and in this place. Suddenly the project took on new importance. I found myself very passionate about this project, and about Brecht in general. The nature of his work and this project led me to think that more research of the man and his theories and an attempt to apply them practically in production would possibly do this project a great good. So I decided I would dig in as deep as I could. I was going to investigate this Brecht guy. I would research and explore his theories on performance and theatre and try to put them to specific use during *The Exception and the Rule* and see what comes of it.

What came of it? The experience of getting to know this man, this inconstant, messy, convoluting, brilliant man was profound. It has helped me to focus my own theories and ideals on what I do (sometimes hand-in-hand with his, sometimes head-to-head), and also has challenged me to investigate why I believe them, in turn bringing them closer to my heart. Whether the production was a success or not is not the issue at hand. I had not planned on writing my thesis on this experience. I feel that sometimes putting words to an experience can demean it. It can turn it into something else entirely. By filtering the experience into words, by distilling it, something is inevitably lost. Once we articulate an experience, we remember the articulation of the experience and not the experience itself. However, this experience, of all the experiences I've had in my time at LSU, deserves the scrutiny that a thesis can deliver. I am very passionate and impulsive and less intellectual when it comes to acting. Brecht encourages the actor to be very conscious. To take the opportunity to articulate this process seems quite appropriate. Articulating the experience is not only good for the experience, it is part of it. It is the final phase of the project. So here goes.

LSU Theatre's *The Exception and the Rule* written by Bertolt Brecht and directed by John Dennis was performed in Hatcher Theatre, December 5-10, 2006. The cast was as follows: Mark Jaynes (the Merchant), Derek Mudd (the Guide), Reuben Mitchell (the Coolie), Nikki Travis (the Innkeeper), Ron Reeder (Judge), Kesha Bullard (Judge), Anna Richardson (Judge), Rebecca Buller, Garrett Bruce, Robert Lee, Daniel LeBlanc (Second Caravan). Patsy Radford was the stage manager. Lights were designed by Pat Acampora. The set was designed by Michael Beagle. Costumes were designed by Ellen Lennox. David Huber designed the sound.

CHAPTER 2. PREPARATION

“There is no purely theoretical access to our manner of acting” –Brecht

My preparation for this production was focused in two ways: my research into Brecht and his theories and my work on the play itself. Working on both certainly illuminated both. And then they started to make sense in context, somewhat during rehearsal, and very much in performance.

Research

To understand why Brecht wrote what he wrote, I had to first understand the time in which he was writing. Brecht, a German Marxist, started writing during the time of civil conflict of Germany's Weimar Republic, through Hitler's rise to power, the Nazi rule of Germany, Fascist rule of other European countries, WWII and the first stages of the Cold War. All of his work is heavily political with strong socialist themes. In 1933 when Hitler took over, Brecht left Germany. His exile landed him in America 1941 for seven years. As a theatre critic, he desecrated the contemporary productions of the time. Expressionism was very popular at the time. It placed man in a fixed place in nature and showed him as powerless to fate. This was distinctly opposed to Brecht's own philosophy. He saw man as an ever-changing being, contradictory in nature, responsible for his own actions. This is consistently a central principle in his plays. Brecht was inspired by fairs, circuses, boxing matches and was an avid fan of cabarets. This factored heavily into his writing, for he was appalled by the sacred idea of pure art in the theatre. Germany during Brecht's time was rife with political strife, poverty, and violence. Brecht was searching for new forms of theatre that could have a practical, tangible influence on his society, rather than contribute to bourgeois complacency. These new

forms inherently necessitated a mode of performance different than that of psychological realism.

Brecht's theories on acting and performance are wide-ranging, varied, and hard to pin down. For this project I focused on a few of his expressed ideas that struck certain chords with me, or that I thought would be very useful to explore during the process for this play.

To say that Brecht had one particular aim would be to demean his entire body of work. It would also be untrue. That being said, from my research, two things struck me as being of prime importance. First is a clear means of story-telling in the theatre. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, through this story-centric theatre comes a revelation of the social implications of the situations depicted in the play, which would in turn illuminate the political or social climate of the time. Brecht's means of performance were usually tailored to result in these two things.

In terms of *Verfremdungseffekt*, the so-called "distancing effect" that was a cornerstone of Brecht's theatrical writings, I feel that it is less an actor's issue, and more a writer's, or even director's. There are so many things that Brecht does dramaturgically, especially in *Exception*, that have this effect, that there is little the actor needs to do to support it, and as far as I can tell, nothing in terms of character. I will explore some of these in the next chapter. It is more of a state of mind. I am not required to feel like I *am* the character. There is no pressure for me to *become* the merchant Karl Langmann. There is no embodiment. There is no transformation between myself and the merchant Karl Langmann. In fact, the Merchant Karl Langmann does not exist. It is truly my obligation to carry out certain tasks, in performance, agreed upon by the playwright, the

director, and myself. It has been stated that Brecht, under this theory, wanted the actor to remain “detached” from her character. As Margaret Eddershaw said, this was “a plea for a more restrained, clear style of acting, not for ‘less’ acting.” I believe this is true. By advocating the actor character detachment, Brecht was advising the actor not to invest emotionally in the character. By keeping an emotional distance from a character, an actor remains unsentimental and is less likely to become self-indulgent in performance. This keeps the actor working with economy of *action*, instead of displaying *emotion*. This will, in turn, keep the audience focused on what the character does, as opposed to how the character feels. *Empathy* was a chief evil in the theatre, Brecht thought and wrote. Emotional proximity was counterproductive to what Brecht wanted. An actor keeping a distance from her character would, in turn, keep the audience at arm’s length, as well.

There is another aspect of *Verfremdungseffekt* that I find particularly exciting. It is a keystone of *Exception and the Rule*, as well as the rest of Brecht’s *Lehrstucke*. It is that of “making the familiar strange.” This means that the actor has a responsibility to the audience, to show the other side of things—whether it be the darker side of a certain social interaction, or an unseen abuse that is taking place. The actor is responsible for not only showing how the character behaves, but joining with the audience to question her behavior. It is, in fact, communicating with the audience whilst in the midst of a scene on stage. It certainly destroys the fourth wall. In his revolutionary essay, “Alienation Effects In Chinese Acting,” Brecht writes of Traditional Chinese Theatre, “the artist’s object is to appear strange and even surprising to the audience. He achieves this by looking strangely at himself and his work.” Also, “if he is representing a cloud, perhaps, showing its unexpected appearance, its soft and strong growth, its rapid yet gradual

transformation, he will occasionally look at the audience as if to say: isn't it just like that?" This is to say that the actor on stage has a relationship to the audience off. He is always aware of being watched. This is not only implicit in the dramaturgy, but can also open so many doors to choices to be made. Making the story clear and facilitating its social functionality must always remain at the heart of anything that is put on the stage. The moments of actor-audience communication can both illustrate the story more clearly and remind the audience that they are being told a story by human beings, and should be weary of getting rapt emotionally by some ethereal character. These moments, Brecht says, are called "gestus." They are used to help the audience understand the sociological implications of a particular situation or relationship that may have seemed normal outside of the theatre. Again, in "Alienation Effects..." Brecht writes, "everyday things are thereby raised above the level of the obvious and automatic."

These key moments are inspired by an aspect of Brecht's theory of performance, which, I think, is the most important for an actor to consider: the actor should look at the character from a social standpoint, instead of a psychological one. Finding this rather simple idea, instantly opened so many doors for me. Brecht focuses mainly on what his characters do, rather than the emotions involved in a scene. There are so many sociological forces that have an effect on what his characters do. His characters are driven by sociological motivations rather than psychological ones. This makes so much sense to me. It is, to me, a more *realistic* way of looking at characters than the psychological approach. We as humans do not function with an awareness of our own psyche. We sometimes make discoveries and assumptions about our nature. We are infinitely more aware of ourselves socially. Our motivations are invariably social. It is

what makes us human. Rarely do we operate, or *act* because we are aware of the psychological forces acting upon us. We act because we are put into a particular social situation. It is very important for an actor to analyze and make choices based on what psychological forces are behind a character. After all, we do that about other people. However, psychology serves very little purpose in action. This concept is, of course, not universal to all playwrights and all characters. Brecht's theories are much more easily practiced in his own plays than anyone else's. That is the nature of it. Some playwrights write psychologically driven characters. Even so, knowing the social situation in which those characters operate is more important than knowing the character's psychological history.

This leads to another important discovery which is another major platform of Brechtian dramaturgy. Since his characters act within very specific social structures, the focus shifts from specific character journeys to ensemble story-telling. All the actors are responsible for creating the situation within which all the other characters act. This is also, in *Exception*, implicit in the text from the opening moments of the prologue. Brecht's plays are dependant on the entire ensemble to tell the story. They are not reliant on one or a few actors to "carry" the play, as he puts it in "Alienation Effects..." They are dependant on a cohesive ensemble not only to more completely tell the story, but because Brecht's plays come so heavy with political sentiment, and that sentiment is so inherent in the story the ensemble must needs be on the same page. If it is not, there is unrest in the statement and the story. JD made sure to continue talking to us, keeping a running dialogue about our production of *Exception*. He always made sure we all knew what we were doing, where we were doing it, and why.

These key elements create for me a value of acting that I believe in much more than that of Stanislavsky's early work and its perpetuators. They come together to illuminate a clear, conscious way of acting without becoming stagnant. This concept is activated by an element which binds these things together: questioning. I believe a great artist has always a questioning spirit. These practical, practicable tools help the actor to not only bring that questioning spirit out and share her questions with an audience, but also to train and inspire her to keep asking questions. Brecht believed that an artist of the theatre is a functioning member of society. These theories on acting allow actors to fulfill their function in making their own particular societies better. This story-based, ensemble-dependant way of acting that demands precision of action and physical clarity, does not negate the way of acting advocated by the early work of Stanislavsky and its successive prophets. Stanislavsky's system stands as a stepping stone toward Brecht's philosophy. It is very important for an actor to understand behavior grounded in reality. Then one can reach beyond those bounds, which is where Brecht's theories live. The theories in practice, however, are dependant on the play.

The Play

The Exception and the Rule was written between 1930 and 1931 but wasn't first performed until 1936. It is one of Brecht's *Lehrstuck*, or learning plays. The *Lehrstuck* is a group of plays written between 1926 and 1933 meant to be performed to educate and illuminate. While Brecht's epic plays, or *Schaustuck*, were written for major theatres, in a way infiltrating the overwhelmingly bourgeois art, the *Lehrstuck* were brought right to the people. At their time of first performance, many of them were performed in schools and prisons and for worker's unions. Historically speaking, they were written in a society

that was, as Roswitha Mueller points out, “in transition to socialism.” *Exception* is heavily political and anti-capitalist. It exposes conscious choices made by the power structure to oppress a working class for social and political gain. In the play, even when a capitalist murders a worker, he cannot be kept from gaining politically. The translation we used for this production was written by Ralph Manheim. All citations from the play are from this translation.

Since Brecht’s plays are heavily dependant on ensemble-storytelling and dramaturgical elements factor so much into a character’s action, it is impossible to do an effective analysis of a character without looking at the play as a whole and its dramaturgy. There are many elements which Brecht includes in his plays that do the work necessary to enact the *Verfremdungseffekt*, making it less of an actor’s job to focus on the “distancing.”

To start, the play has several speeches given by all the players. This immediately dashes the illusion that each actor is the character he portrays. There is no illusion. The first of the speeches is the prologue. The actors are simply telling the audience precisely what is going to happen and why. This colors every action of the play afterward. This also had a huge impact on how I looked at the merchant, and how I performed. It is so quintessentially “Brechtian,” and so important to the production, that it is worth noting here:

We are about to tell you
The story of a journey. An exploiter
And two of the exploited are the travelers.
Examine carefully the behavior of these people:
Find it surprising though not unusual
Inexplicable though normal
Incomprehensible though it is the rule.
Consider even the most insignificant, seemingly simple

Action with distrust. Ask yourselves whether it is necessary
Especially if it is usual.
We ask you expressly to discover
That what happens all the time is not natural.
For to say that something is natural
In such times of bloody confusion
Of ordained disorder, of systematic arbitrariness
Of inhuman humanity is to
Regard it as unchangeable.

It is also possible that this could be performed as a song. The text gives no indication as to that, but the Lehrstück were famous for including songs. There are many songs in this play. They come at the end, or sometimes in the middle of scenes, usually sung by one character. They usually sum the action of a scene or simply say what a character is doing, what his action of the play is, and why. A character may also speak in third person for a moment, to highlight what has happened in the story so far. There is also a lot of direct address, where an actor speaks directly to the audience. That happens right after the prologue.

In scene one, “The Race through the Desert” (Brecht wished to have his scene titles spoken aloud, or displayed on placards or projected), we see the merchant driving the guide and coolie, who is carrying baggage, through “the desert.” The first thing that happens is the merchant speaks directly to the audience. He reveals that he is rushing to Urga, a fictional place, possibly representing an area in Mongolia, so that he can be the first to arrive and get a concession, most likely to drill for oil there. He is shrewd and ruthless, he admits. There is then a scene between him and the coolie and the guide where the merchant makes the guide beat the coolie, on the threat of getting him fired and reported for insubordination. During the scene, he reveals his obsessive determination to get to Urga, and his paranoia.

Scene two, “End of the Much Traveled Road,” shows the merchant encountering two policemen. They make sure he is okay and stay out of his way.

Scene three, “The Dismissal of the Guide at Han Station,” has the merchant buttering up the guide. He treats him kindly and gives him tobacco in order to get him to work harder in the traveling days to come. At the end of their encounter he tries to pit the guide against the coolie so that the guide will not feel bad about beating him when they need to hurry. Then the guide and coolie talk, and then the guide reveals that the merchant is going to get the concession so he can stop the drilling oil to get “hush money.” The merchant sees friendliness between the guide and coolie and starts to get very uneasy. He speaks directly to the audience and tells them how dastardly he thinks the guide is and reveals he’s going to dismiss him. He then “enters the scene,” so to speak, and fires the guide. He pays the guide his wages up to the moment and makes sure that the innkeeper of the station they are at sees that he does so. This reveals the merchant’s social savvy. He always covers his back socially and politically. He will not do anything detrimental to his future gain. He decides to leave presently with the coolie. He realizes the danger in what he’s doing, since neither he nor the coolie know where to go. He makes the innkeeper tell the coolie the way while he writes a letter and gives it to the innkeeper to give to the “competitors” who are following so that someone knows where he is. Whilst he writes the letter, the guide gives the coolie a water bottle and advises him to keep it for himself, because if the merchant knows he has it, he’ll certainly take it. He sings a song. The song reveals a crucial element to the merchant’s character: “the strong man fights and the sick man dies.”

Scene four, “Dialogue in a Dangerous Region,” begins with the coolie singing and the merchant denigrating him, affirming his own superiority, both to the coolie directly and to the audience. He then makes the coolie stop singing for fear someone will hear them, again revealing the merchant's paranoia. When the coolie starts to wipe away their tracks in the sand, the merchant suspects the coolie is leading him somewhere to kill him. He makes the coolie halt. They continue on, but the merchant's own paranoia doubles over and he decides to wipe away the tracks.

Scene five, “By the Raging Torrent” reveals the two on the bank of the Mir River. This is a difficult staging challenge, because Brecht calls for the river to be there on-stage. Dramaturgically it serves to keep the audience aware that they are watching a play because it is an impossible task to design and implement a realistic river on-stage. Nor is it practical for a 30 minute play. Anyway, the merchant wishes to cross, but the coolie advises they wait a day till it stops flooding. The merchant pulls out his “it's good for humanity” rhetoric on the coolie. The coolie still doesn't want to cross so the merchant accuses him of being concerned only with “base considerations of gain.” The coolie sings a song and advises once again to wait a day. The merchant threatens him with a gun. He sings a song.

Scene six, “The Camping Place,” opens with the coolie pitching a tent with a broken arm. The merchant offers the coolie some cash when they get to Urga as recompense for the coolie's breaking his arm crossing the river. The merchant speaks to the audience and completely degrades the character of the coolie, speaking of all coolies as animals, “beggars.” He clearly draws class distinctions between rich and poor, strong and weak. He sings a song claiming his strength, even claiming it in the name of God.

“And the God of things the way they are made lord and slave!/It was a good thing.” The merchant then sees the coolie in close proximity, and suspects he was listening. He sends him to the tent and says he’ll sleep out here because he’s afraid of what the coolie will do to him. The coolie goes in and prepares a place to sleep. The merchant’s paranoia gets out of hand and he speaks to the audience about why the coolie has every right to want to get even with him for his arm breaking. He wishes he knew what the coolie was plotting while the coolie is seen peacefully lying down to sleep.

Scene 7, “The Shared Water section ‘a’”, opens with the coolie and the merchant traversing the desert. The coolie reveals he is lost. The merchant refuses to believe him and demands he keep moving. ‘Section b’ has them clearly lost, roaming the desert with no direction. The merchant gets very bent out of shape and beats the coolie viciously. He becomes “beside himself with rage,” as Brecht’s stage direction puts it. After he beats him, he demands the coolie continue moving, and says “to himself,” that he should not have beat the coolie in this situation. In ‘section c,’ the merchant makes the coolie pitch the tent, and reveals that there is no more water left, still unaware that the coolie has his own bottle, given to him by the guide. The merchant then reveals to the audience that he has a bottle of his own. He drinks of it, but, speaking to the audience, he warns that if the coolie notices he’d be stupid not to kill the merchant straight. The merchant draws his gun and warns that if the coolie comes near him, he will get shot. The coolie, unaware of the merchant’s own water and fearing being found with the merchant half-dead from thirst and himself still alive and still with water left, since he would be put right on trial if that happened, approaches the merchant to share his water. The merchant, mistaking the coolie’s bottle for a stone, kills him.

Scene eight, “Song of the Courts” is a song sung “by the players as they set the stage for the courtroom scene.” It reveals the judges as being just as evil and dishonest the bandits they try.

Scene nine, “Courtroom,” is the trial of the merchant for the murder of the coolie in a tribunal court. The coolie’s wife is there, demanding damages from the merchant for her husband’s murder. The judge asks the merchant, the guide, and members of the second caravan a series of questions. The merchant plays the innocent to the judge. The judge advises the merchant not to make himself out in such a light, but to reveal that the coolie had reason enough to want to kill the merchant. So the merchant twists the situation with the coolie to make it seem like he was virtuous but that certain things happened that would make the coolie see the merchant as having wronged him, and want retribution. The guide unveils the water bottle as evidence, and the merchant exclaims that it must have been a stone that the coolie approached him with. The judge deliberates. The guide sings a song that is a summation of the events at hand, and that the system is the perpetrator. The merchant reveals that he was ruined because the coolie was too dead to carry his baggage to Urga and, consequently, the merchant could not conclude arrangements on the concession. The judge then gives the verdict that the merchant is innocent. The coolie, he says, had every right to want to kill him, and the merchant, he says, had every right to suspect just that. Therefore, he says, the merchant acted in “legitimate self-defense.”

There is then an epilogue by the players. It is in essence a repetition of the prologue except the last two lines:

And where you have recognized abuse
Do something about it!

This is the point of the entire play, right here in these two lines. Brecht posits that things like this happen all the time. It is our duty as citizens to see it and put a stop to it.

I have hence highlighted the action of the play. I have included some things, not all of them, that other characters do in the play. I think this is a crucial thing to do when working on a Brecht play. It is my responsibility, as an actor, to make sure that the action of the play is clear. Knowing the action of another character in a certain circumstance will have an effect on choices I make at certain times. Certain moments of action demand a higher level of specificity. It is very important I note those moments for what my character *does* is much more important than how he *feels* about it.

Behavior being more important than emotional quality does not mean that I create a flat character. I am still responsible for presenting a fully-realized character. While psychological realism lends itself to the actor finding a “thru-line” for a character’s behavior, Brecht advises that an actor highlight a character’s contradictions. There are many different sides to the merchant, but two present themselves quite clearly. One is the merchant on a quest for his personal gain. He is on a mission taking a path of destruction and will stop at nothing. This merchant is determined, driven, fast-thinking and fast-acting, tunnel-visioned, impatient, untrusting, untrustworthy, unapologetic, ruthless, relentless, mercenary. Then there is the side of the merchant that he presents when speaking to the audience. He justifies the things he does to the coolie and the guide as being for the greater good. This merchant is focused, politically and socially savvy, sensitive, caring, dependable, a fighter, a strong man in the company of very weak, lazy individuals. These two sides complete the vision of a Capitalist. However, there is a

third side that infiltrates both of these. It is the side of the merchant that is painfully and irreducibly paranoid.

If the relationships the merchant has in the play are anything, they are tense. He has most of the people in the play in compromising positions, figuratively speaking. He manipulates people until they either capitulate or he does them in. For instance he has the guide backed into a corner as his employer and still completely screws him over. The merchant knows that the guide is very smart and rather virtuous. Conversely he claims to the coolie that the guide is disloyal. He sees the guide, like he sees most of the people in the play, as a threat. The merchant must actually use different tactics to get the guide on his side. Whereas, with other people, the coolie for instance, he can make them do whatever he wants. Even when he plays nice with the guide, he still affirms his superiority. He talks down to him, and uses phrases like, “you people” and “your kind.” The merchant is in a way at the mercy of the guide because the guide knows where they are going. So the merchant despises him, because of the weakness he showed in traveling and by not beating the coolie when demanded, but also needs something from him. But when the merchant discovers the guide and the coolie in talks with one another, he throws the guide’s mercy out the window and gives the coolie the responsibility that the guide had. The guide, though, has much more leverage to make his own decisions than the coolie, because he is in the union. The coolie is not.

The coolie must suffer the brunt of the merchant’s paranoia and aggression, especially when they are traveling alone together. The merchant, however, is dependant on him, as well, because he needs his baggage to be carried. But because he is not in the union, and doesn’t have the benefits the guide does, the coolie must suffer much more

abuse and harassment and, ultimately, death. The merchant treats the coolie like a dog. He sees himself as strong and the coolie as weak. He constantly affirms his superiority over the merchant. It is a factor in every moment they are together. There are times even when the merchant's treatment of the coolie extends beyond his determination to get to Urga and becomes an outlet for aggression, for instance the beating. We see, in the merchant's relationship to the coolie, the merchant's obsession with gain, his paranoia and his willingness to step on whomever it takes to get to his destination.

The merchant's relationships with the guide and the coolie exemplify the bourgeois' relationship with the working class, their systematic oppression, and their view of workers as expendable. We see though that workers are essential to the bourgeois way of life. In this particular journey, which is indicative of the state of things, no matter what the working class does the bourgeois will find a way to come out with a win. The point of the play, Brecht says in the epilogue, is that this doesn't have to be the case. The workers, whom the bourgeois needs, who are being oppressed, abused, and even murdered, can recognize the abuse and "do something about it."

CHAPTER 3. IMPLEMENTATION

First Reactions

I went into working on the play with all this research in the forefront of my mind. Whether that was a good idea or a bad one is arguable. Since Brecht worked very physically with actors (rehearsal testimonies affirm this) and favored the physical life of a character over the emotional, and that I consider myself a very physical actor, I decided to come up with a physical conceit for the merchant. I had pictured him as very rigid, staccato, straight, sharp, direct, and quite tense and upright. He went around like this muscling his way through the play and became even accentuated in this until a certain moment. This moment was where he pulled the trigger on the coolie. In this moment all of his tension released and he physically let go. I did not end up going through with this vision of the merchant and it's a good thing. I once ran into JD in the lounge and told him of it in passing. He didn't seem enthusiastic about it. It was then that I realized why it was so misguided: it was manufactured in my mind. I created this from an image in my mind and had yet to put it in my body. Once I did, I was sure to find it faltered quickly.

My first instincts regarding the character of the merchant were unpleasant. I think he is an incredible shit. I am a "liberal" and find my political beliefs are mostly in line with Brecht's. I am decidedly anti-capitalist, but not to the extent to which I try to stop capitalism with my every fiber. I have my own methods, like not shopping at Wal-Mart and trying to use gasoline as little as possible. I have a hard time respecting people like the merchant. They leave a very bad taste in my mouth. The way he treats human beings like they are not human beings, his manipulation of the court system and his only intent

being personal gain are actions that are absolutely deplorable. At first, I was unabashed about letting my personal feelings about the merchant come through. This would later prove to be an issue in the rehearsal process. I started to let my distaste for the merchant come through in how I played him. JD advised me to take it in another direction.

About the play, however, I was very excited. I really appreciated the choice to perform it. I thought it had the potential to either turn some heads or rally the troops, depending on what side of the fence the troops sat on. The translation we picked was rather clunky and clumsy in language but was infinitely better than the first translation we had considered by Eric Bentley. JD seemed to be taken with a certain passion for doing this play in this part of our country, at this place in our country's history.

The Production

This play and, even more so, JD's concept of production, was a definite smack in the face to big oil companies. Seeing how Louisiana is a major oil refiner, we were anxious to see how this play would be received.

It seemed as though JD was pulling out all the stops in terms of a political statement. The play "took place" in Iraq. We used the same place names, like Urga, Mir River, etc, but, since these places are fictional to begin with, we based them in the Middle East. The floor was to be a stylized map of the country of Iraq, the costumes to represent US military desert fatigues. We decided that the merchant worked exclusively for Exxon and the second caravan represented BP. So we were definitely making the play relevant to our time.

We made a few changes to the text. For instance, we had the merchant say "oil concession," rather than just "concession." There were a couple of things that we did to

make our conceit clearer. We were questioning from day one how we were going to handle the songs. We ended up speaking all of them, even cutting a few. This choice is questionable in terms of its “Brechtianism” but the effect was usually as jarring as singing would have been. There was a marked change in tone from the more naturalistic dialogue to the declamatory, rhythmic poetry of the songs. Characters switch immediately from speaking in the first person to the third. Had we more time I think we would have written our own music to the songs. But, alas...!

In terms of casting, there were some delicate issues to which we were all quite sensitive. I, a white guy, was cast as the merchant, and Reuben, a black guy, was cast as the coolie. The coolie is, for all intents and purposes, the merchant’s slave. There were some very touchy images that came up during the rehearsal process, like me riding into a scene on Reuben’s back or a large rope around Reuben’s neck. Since class lines are a huge part of this play, and racism and class lines are indubitably linked in America, the production started to resonate deeply with institutionalized racism. These images then became very effective gestures, as they communicated the story and the political information very clearly.

I am very much in favor of theatre that scrutinizes these issues. In fact, I think it is to an extent the job of theatre and art to do so. As artists, we have a responsibility to our community. More so than nearly all of the productions I have been involved with in my time at LSU, this one took that into account. These concepts we were presenting could have easily been seen by detractors as anti-American. I believe we are no more anti-American than Brecht was anti-German. Certainly we were disapproving of some of the

political decisions our leaders were making. It is our responsibility, as previously stated, to *question*. On this issue, I'd like to quote David Milch, creator of the show *Deadwood*.

“I'm a big admirer of our country. And I admire it so much that I love to chronicle its shortcomings and its disasters and its unfairnesses and abhorations because I think that's the way to testify to love. I want to glorify America and my idea of how to glorify it is to show it whole as best I can. I believe that it withstands that scrutiny. So I look at it hard and that's a joy.”

I feel the same way. In an area which was and still is raw from the effects and injustices of Hurricane Katrina, and dealing with wartime of seriously questionable necessity, taking this particularly scrutinizing look at our country was, in fact, honoring it.

Rehearsal Process

The rehearsal process for this play is now a blur. It was so fast. We rehearsed for barely two weeks. That time was about getting the play up and into the space. Most of the major discoveries happened during the performance run of the play. However, there were a few key moments in the rehearsal process worth noting.

In the first rehearsal, I set out to put to use my preconceived (or ill-conceived) ideas about the merchant. It was a mistake. I felt constrained, unimaginative, and very tense. Here is a journal entry from after the second night of rehearsal:

“So now we're two days into major rehearsals for exception and the rule. Tonight made me feel great. As Reuben said, “Man, this play's gonna be all right.” I agree. I was jazzed after JD's talk tonight. Last night we just started and went into it and it was weird for sure. There are just some things that are touchy about the play. Like race issues that come from casting and all that. But JD made me feel great tonight. The first thing he said was, ‘I'm not directing a cartoon.’ That immediately got my feet on the ground. It's about people. I had had all these thoughts about the merchant and making him very strange physically and just doing my weird thing and him being very stylized. NO! I realized how dumb that was tonight. Any weird stuff I bring to it, I'll find in rehearsal. Already the stuff that's just happened in rehearsal has been weirder and more unnatural, as the prologue says, than anything I could have manufactured.

The important thing is to put on this play. To tell the story and let it resonate loudly with the audience. It will.

‘Limbs,’ JD says.

Remember—paranoia, drilling. Everything is greased.

Also, I want to always remember the prologue. And not let the audience forget it. I

Love working in Hatcher. It’s so small after spending so much time in the Reilly and on the Rippon. But it poses its own challenges. Audience everywhere, no resonance. Proximity—everything means so much.

Oh anyway, I realized that I do need to look at the play from the human standpoint. That it’s about moments. I’m so selfish sometimes and just want to act the shit out of something but don’t even know what that means.”

After this evening, and JD’s inspirational speech (there were a few of them during this process), things went along quite well. We got a lot of things staged, explored a lot, even with stuff that we ended up cutting from the show but still contributed to the experience. After about a week, however, I started to get rather anxious and nervous. Not only had I not been prepared for the amount of action I had on-stage (nearly every moment of the play), but I again started to feel stifled. I felt stiff, blocked, and didn’t feel any sense of freedom to make choices. So I consulted JD. Here is the journal entry from that day, November 27, 2006.

“Good meeting with JD today. We talked through the first seven scenes. I’m a little less freaked out, but still freaked out nonetheless. He helped me find some actions, some differentiations, which will all hopefully lead to depth—or truth.

--A lot of covering up. Doing something in the scene explaining or covering-up to the audience.

--Always the politician to the audience. Evil things done in the scene then go “kiss the babies.”

--Look for the “sound bite.”

--This we talked about and then it was pointed out in the article I was reading, “Actors on Brecht.”

--Think about the social and political motivations of the character instead of the psychological.

This is brilliant, especially for political theatre, but also everything else. Everyone’s got a reputation to deal with. That is how people think really, not in terms of their own psychology. YES! BRECHT!

--Never forget the audience is there. Or if I forget, remember (boom!).

This was something I thought of—that I will acknowledge someone coughing or moving or whatever in the theatre. “Active participants,” says Brecht. GREAT.

--“Get the vote!” Rally—the “good thing” speech is a rally.

He also said I was too willing to show my nastiness, which is SO TRUE. I mean to show the merchant’s nastiness. So getting the vote and being the politician will help me cover. Everyone will know, will see—I don’t need to spell it out for them, no I don’t.”

This last thing was a big deal. I wanted to show that I thought he was a shit. But, if I’m going to do the play and our intent justice, I must show the merchant *in action*.

This is what I feel is meant by “detachment” from a character. I must show the merchant as purely as I can and the behavior that is written into the text, but at certain moments I may be permitted to communicate on a personal level to the audience, to have a “isn’t it just like that?” moment.

I cannot describe the profound effect that the shift in perspective, from psychological to sociological, had on me. I was suddenly taken out of my own head, and my own thoughts and thrust into reality. It made me SO present, because I was constantly assessing what it was people were thinking about me and how they were looking at me. I remember distinctly one moment, in an argument that the merchant has with the guide, where he dismisses him, I was going off on Derek, who played the guide. Whilst I was doing this, I started to think about this sociological standpoint and I thought that in this moment the merchant would be hyper-aware of how he was being seen in this particular moment. Instantly, a complete change happened inside and outside of me—I *really* saw Derek. Derek is my classmate with whom I had spent most of my days for, at this point, two and a half years. I saw him in a completely different light. I became very conscious of every move he made, how he moved, what he looked at, how he looked at

things, and especially how he looked at me. I suddenly became aware of the room, and anyone in it and where they were looking, what they were looking at, and how they could possibly see me. It was wonderful. I managed to carry this way of working, to a greater or lesser degree, through the run of the performance. It has even appeared in shows I have worked on since. To simplify, it is just looking for nuance in my scene partner, or in the room—sights and sounds and movements or disruptions. However, having felt it on such a level, there is no way to simplify it. If I take nothing from this experience, I will take this sensation.

There is another aspect of the rehearsal process I'd like to expand upon. JD, it seemed, had not much faith that the production would come together. Several times he mentioned difficulties with acquiring the costumes or the sound or other aspects of the production. He made that potential known to us, the actors, quite frequently. He did this possibly to strike fear into us, or to let us know that this may be something we would have to deal with. Never once though, was he disparaged about it. When he spoke to us, he didn't speak from a place of anger or complaining. The central thing in these conversations was that we were going to tell this story no matter what. This permeated our rehearsal process. When the light board stopped working during our tech rehearsal, no one got mad, maybe a little crabby, but certainly not angry because we knew we would continue to tell the story with or without lights, with or without sound, or costumes. JD's attitude toward our shaky production mirrored his attitude toward the state of the world we were talking about. It was, in a way, "isn't this absurd?" Not in a negative way, it was just that. I think that attitude permeated the play, as well. There were instances of the production that were just a little "off," or shed a light of absurdity

on something. and all the actors involved acted as if it were just the way things were. That attitude added to the absurdity of the thing at hand. For instance, the two policemen were cast as a female and a male, and the male (Ron), had a bow in his hair and lipstick, and the female (Anna) had a Hitler-esque mustache. These quirks were revealed after they removed their gas-masks, through which they were trying to make-out while slow dancing to the Eagles' "Hotel California." These things were not treated lightly, like they were frivolous comedy but were taken seriously, as if it were just the way it was.

In retrospect, the rehearsal process is somewhat of a whirling dervish. We were struggling to get the show up, to get all the elements in place and I was very concerned, perhaps overly concerned, with line-memorization. I was sick for most of it, coming off of an ear-infection acquired during the previous show which took place in a swimming pool. It was actually during the run of performance that things started to solidify and I started to realize actually what I was doing and that I had made actual choices.

Performance Run

I distinctly remember the opening night of *Exception and the Rule*. I was extraordinarily nervous. It had been a long time since I had felt that nervous. I couldn't eat. My nerves were going crazy. They were nerves of excitement, nerves of terror. They were nerves that knew something could go terribly wrong. They were nerves of doubt. We had only had a chance to run the play once or maybe twice, and this was the first time with some of the props and newly made changes. The show was physically very challenging for me. With an audience coming in, and the added adrenaline, how would I fare? The nerves got in my way a few times. I was shaky. I stumbled over words, jumped a few lines. In fact, I felt rather awful about the first run. The second as

well for that matter was disappointing. Round about the third show (there were only seven) I started to get into a flow. I started to feel comfortable with the show, or started to believe I wasn't going to ruin it for everyone and so I started to dig into moments, and really live with the show.

The audience had a GREAT DEAL of an effect on the performance. The whole rehearsal process I had been floundering in these direct address moments. I had no one to directly address. I was reduced to talking to empty seats or JD or other cast members. Getting fresh eyes and souls to communicate with was a huge boost. I suddenly had people with individual opinions and attitudes and I could try to influence them. Just knowing that my words were being heard was a help. The first few nights of performances were awkward. I was trying to talk to everybody at once. I soon found out that does not work with direct address. If I am talking to everybody at once, I'm not actually talking to anyone and certainly not looking at anyone in the eye. I have to look at someone in the audience, and while communicating with them, make an assessment of whether or not they are on my side and then decide if I want to do something about my assessment. If I am advocating, as the merchant frequently does in the play, I found that I needed to talk to specific people. I needed to pick out certain people who maybe were decidedly not on my side and try to persuade them. This has a much greater effect with an audience than if I am trying to rally them all simultaneously. If I talk to one person, have a relationship with that person, the audience sees the relationship, instead of a general wash of "advocating." Then I am able to use the person in that moment or others. I can reference the person with an attitude of "yeah, you know what I mean," or "this guy

gets it.” After making this discovery, the direct address moments started to take on much more life. Naturally they were different from night to night.

There was one moment of direct address, however, that I consistently did not like. This came in the moment during “The Camping Place,” where I talk to the audience about the coolie and reference him as one of “these beggars.” Not only did this particular monologue make me feel like a bad person but I had to go out into the seating banks and sit with the audience, next to one particular member. I touched some audience members, patted them on the back or touched their leg knowingly. Personally, I do not like when these sorts of things happen to me as an audience member. In that respect, I am not a Brechtian theatre-goer. I go to the theatre to have a particular experience not to be an “active participant.” Also, as an actor I find these moments very uncomfortable. Perhaps it is because I remember how I feel as an audience member and don’t want to impose on someone else. Or perhaps it is because I have a particularly strong energy flowing through me that is markedly different from that of an audience member and when they meet in such proximity the two energies clash. Mostly it is because I hate asking the audience member to “play along.” I am coming at it with all of my conviction and energy, and I feel like, in moments like that, the audience member, knowing that all eyes are on them, must feign like they are really engaged with what I am saying. I tried to put them at ease with methods that I feel were rather “Brechtian.” For instance, when speaking to a particular audience member with all the vigor that the merchant might, I, Mark, touched the audience member on the shoulder or leg or something, with the intent of putting them at ease. They were listening intently to the merchant’s words, but also being comforted by the actor. Before I even began speaking to them I would touch them

as if to say, “its going to be okay.” Whether this worked or not, I do not know. I can’t be sure if the audience even perceived a difference between “me” and “the merchant.”

Another thing I did was to give them a smile or a wink near the end of the speech, as I left the seats to go on-stage for a new diatribe. They would then become involved in what I, the merchant was saying, and then I, Mark, would thank them for listening, or give them a knowing smile as if we both knew what was going on. To me, this was a very effective way of creating distance between them and the character. As far as I’m concerned, it also gave the story more credibility. I was not expecting them to buy every word I was saying. What I was expecting them to buy was that we, this group of actors, were telling them a very important story. And that by revealing the artifice behind our “magic,” in this case acting technique, we let them know that we weren’t trying to cheat them in any way. It’s just us.

I do remember one very significant moment while doing this. The play was staged in-the-round. One night, when I went out to the seats to relate with the audience, I looked across the nearly bare stage at the audience bank opposite the one I was in. What a feeling! I didn’t feel I was the particular focus at the moment because of all the people around me. I was making all kinds of noise, and in that instant I jumped right back on-stage to give the rest of the speech. I felt like I was completely disrupting the entire room, a great thing for the merchant to do. It was an upsetting feeling, but in truth, as a theatre-goer, one I’ve wanted to have.

Another way we destroyed the artifice of what we were doing was to hang out in the wings, clearly visible to the audience. A lot of the cast did this while they were off-stage. The way the theatre is configured makes this really easy. When I would go off at

a certain point, I would “drop character,” meaning release the physical life of the character at the moment, and walk a certain area, out of focus but still quite visible, and grab a drink of water, perhaps, or fix my tie, or just stand and breathe. I did this while still focusing on the action on-stage, as not to deter from it. I was quiet, focused and inconspicuous. When I was needed to continue the story telling, I approached the stage and adapted the physical life of the character that was necessary at that moment.

Perhaps the most significant moment like this came at the very end of the play. There was a large brawl that concluded the courtroom scene. It was well choreographed and ended quickly to very focused, slow, tense, movement between Reuben and myself. I sank to the ground very slowly as the lights slowly faded to black and some rather dramatic music played out. It was quite a heavy moment. Immediately, the lights came up, the cast stood up, Bob Dylan started to play over the sound system, we all “broke character,” or rather adapted a physical life of being “just ourselves,” and approached the audience, face-to-face, leaving a bare stage. We each then gave “our version” of the epilogue to whomever was in our vicinity. We were each responsible for a section of the audience, usually no more than 10 people, and we went up and just talked to them. The first performance we all recited the actual prologue to our section. This proved problematic. Some of the cast, including myself, felt very uncomfortable speaking this heavy handed text that ends in “Do something about it!” to a group of people, when we ourselves do very little “about it.” It felt like we were, as my castmate Daniel put it, moralizing with no morals behind us. Therefore, JD came up with an alternative. We decided that we would speak what we want, keeping within the spirit of the epilogue. Whatever we felt comfortable giving, we could give. It became one of the best moments

from the show, and from what I heard of audience feedback, one of the most touching. Some of the cast talked about how they write letters to congress. Others talked about specific moments where they felt abused by a larger social structure. Others talked about the war, gave personal stories. Some of us stuck to the original epilogue. Some talked philosophy, others politics, others economics. One night I quoted Ghandi. I usually stuck pretty close to what the epilogue originally said, because I really liked it, I just put it into my own words. I added a couple things, though, like how I thought it was more than “just a play.” I tried to tie it into issues in our own culture, not just political, like racism, sexism, ageism, and homophobia. I asked them to “keep thinking about it once you leave the theatre.” Instead of a call to action of, “Do something about it,” I tried to empower us all by saying, for instance, “We can do something about it,” or “We can stop this sort of thing.” I made sure to thank them for their time. I remember very vividly closing night. I said something quite close to “So that’s the end of the play. This is our closing night. We don’t get to do this play anymore, but I’m okay with that. In working on this play I’ve learned that there is always something behind everything. There is always a driving force, seen or unseen, behind everything. I think it is our responsibility as citizens to question things, to try to see what’s behind. Every decision we make is a political decision. We can actually stop monstrosities like the one depicted in this play. We can do something about it. Thank you for coming.” That was the only night I feel like I said something I honestly meant, and didn’t get nervous and flubber over words and sound like a big dummy. It was the first night I let myself actually talk to these seven or so people.

The audience had another profound effect on how I performed. One major thing that I kept trying to explore with the merchant was his paranoia. JD suggested that I use this paranoia as a means for letting the whole audience see me, since we were staging in-the-round. I kept trying to envision the audience in the seats during rehearsals, as with the direct address. I couldn't have predicted how important they would become in making me feel paranoid. I tried to tune into them in a deep way, to pay attention to the nuances of each audience. I tried to let each movement that they made, each sound they made, each cough or laugh or shift in the seat affect me. I tried to use them a great deal. It worked. When I acknowledged every miniscule movement that the audience made, I certainly felt paranoid.

In rehearsal for the show, I kept trying to find moments of gestus. It wasn't till the performance run that I found one. It was a repeated gesture that kept popping up and soon I placed it and its repetitions strategically. It was a gesture I did with my tie. I tightened it rather tight, even when it didn't need to be, and made a motion with my head as if to illustrate that I had tightened to the top of my head. There were several places I did this, which will be shown in the physical score. There are times, also, where I loosened the tie with different sensibilities. This gesture became for me a traceable metaphor for the merchant's journey.

CHAPTER 4. Physical Score

What follows is the physical score. It requires some notes preceding.

Since the play was performed in-the-round, it is important to delineate the cardinal directions of the stage. In the score, the stage is directed with Downstage (DS) being towards the stage manager's booth. Upstage (US) is the direction opposite that of the booth. The abbreviations used in the score stand for the following:

D – down
U – up
L – left
R – right
C – center
S – stage
X – cross

I describe physical action as much possible without much description of the emotion behind it. I stay away from the emotional quality of moments except when necessary, for instance, if the emotional quality is consciously in opposition to the moment, or if it is used specifically to highlight a point of the story. I focus instead on the quality of movement. In this case, the objective of all movement onstage is to tell the story as clearly as possible. The job of this score is to tell, as clearly as possible, how I helped tell the story.

Text	Action
<p>Hurry you lazy mules, two days from now we must be at Han Station. That will give us a whole day's lead.</p> <p>I am Karl Langmann, a merchant. I am going to Urga to conclude arrangements on an oil concession. My competitors are close behind me. The first comer will get the concession. Thanks fo my shrewdness, the energy with which I have overcome all manner of difficulties, and my ruthless treatment of my employees, I have completed this much of the journey in little more than half the usual time. Unfortunately my competitors are close behind. See there they are at our heels again!</p> <p>Why don't you drive the porter harder? I hired you to drive him, but you people expect me to pay you to go for a stroll. Have you any idea what this trip is costing me? It's not your money. But if you sabotage me, I'll report you to the employment office</p>	<p>Enter DSR after Rebecca crosses between Ron and Reuben, walking backwards. Turn SR of pillar, stop C, turn to face SL, take several (5-7) steps toward SL. Stop. Lay down on back. This movement is done quite fast, rather jerky, with determination.</p> <p>When the music begins, then begin --Improvised Movement— Start in stillness. Let the music move my limbs— fingers to arms, toes to legs, bring them in the air. Let the limbs pull my body upwards. Work in concert with the ensemble. Get onto feet, stay low. Rise up. Stay behind Rebecca to support her as Reuben lifts her up. Get her into the air, everyone supporting her. Reach upwards. Keep reaching with all my might until... Explosion sound cue. Fall backwards. Drilling sound cue. Writhe on the ground. Move toward UL exit. Exit UL.</p> <p>Sound cue "The race through the desert." Percussive music. Enter UL, behind Derek and Reuben, Running very fast. Run SL of pillar, turn at DS pillar. X to C, shouting. X US. Turn sharply, speak to audience. X DS.</p> <p>Circle to UR corner.</p> <p>Look out UR for second caravan.</p> <p>Move toward guide and coolie UC.</p> <p>Get coolie onto his feet. Get in his face. To guide.</p>

<p>in Urga.</p> <p>You haven't got the right tone, you'll never be a real guide. I should have taken a more expensive one. They keep gaining on us. Why don't you beat the fellow?</p> <p>I don't approve of beating, but at the present time beating is necessary. If I don't get there first I'll be ruined.</p> <p>This porter you've taken on is your brother, admit it! He's a relative, that's why you don't beat him. I know you people. You can be brutal when you want to be. Beat him, or I'll discharge you. You can sue for your wages. Good God, they're catching up with us.</p> <p>(second caravan: "wait for us.") The Devil take you! I'll drive my men for three days, two days with insults, the third day with promises. When we reach Urga, we'll see. My competitors are still at my heels, but tomorrow I'll march all night, that will lose them, and I'll be in Han station on the third day, one day sooner than anyone else.</p> <p>This is Han Station. Thank God, I've made it... ...still the police to keep order.</p> <p>...the road is a disgrace but what I start, I finish.</p>	<p>Move UR to look out for 2nd caravan.</p> <p>Rush to guide. Shove him off the coolie. Turn away from him, Gesture UR. Turn to guide. Pull Beating stick (funnoodle) out of his pocket on "beat" To audience, justify myself.</p> <p>Move UR.</p> <p>X to guide, still UC. X to the DS side of them.</p> <p>X to UR quickly. Look out.</p> <p>To UR. X to CS.</p> <p>To SL X UR.</p> <p>X C. Jump on Reuben's back. He carries me DL. Hide out behind Anna and Ron as 2nd caravan arrive. When they get close to DL, Ron hands me a "TO DETROIT" sign, I lift it, spin it, hold it so it points UR. They go off.</p> <p>Sound cue, Hotel California. Get up. Turn to audience SL. Gest: fix tie. Turn SR. Follow guide and coolie as we walk SR. Turn US at C. Pat coolie on the back as he lies down, point assuringly at guide. Turn DS. To audience. Circle stage, end up C, facing police.</p> <p>Gesture to audience with "politician thumb."</p>
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<p>...Is a police escort obtainable?</p> <p>...(guide: in the middle of the desert) Have some tobacco. Here's a cigarette paper. You people would go through fire for a good drag. I can't think of anything you wouldn't do to that smoke in your throats. That God we've got plenty. Our stash will take us to Urga three times over.</p> <p>Let's sit down, my friend... ...but we can smoke together can't we?</p> <p>...all right, pack everything up. And don't forget the water, I hear there aren't many waterholes in the desert. By the way, my friend...</p> <p>...there he may show his true colors. Yes, you're the better man... ...You'd better keep your distance.</p> <p>Funny people</p> <p>(coolie: you know the way?)</p> <p>With the porter he really talks. With him he can sit down! With him he smokes!</p> <p>Listen to that! Now he's advising him to take his time and not to risk his precious life!... ...I'll have to get rid of that fellow.</p> <p>I told you to check the packing. Now we'll see how you carry out my orders.</p>	<p>Take several dollars out of breast pocket. Turn to exit DR. Innkeeper stops me, gives me drink. Nod approvingly. Continue to exit.</p> <p>Off-stage, but still visible. Pace around "deep in thought." Full-body thinking.</p> <p>Enter DR. Two steps in. Offer tobacco from pouch with left hand. Offer cigarette paper with right hand, take a step in. come fully in. Follow him DL.</p> <p>Sit down on ground, take out rolled J. from pouch. Offer J. to guide. He is still. Slowly reach the J. out. Put it between his knees. Laugh. Hit the ground, stand up. Turn SR, turn back.</p> <p>Turn SR, turn back. Approach guide at DL pillar, put arm around him, walk very slowly and carefully toward UR. Stop w/ right foot elevated. Continue on. Pinch his cheek. Exit DR. To myself...</p> <p>Approach DR pillar, out of sight of guide/coolie.</p> <p>To audience. DS of pillar. US of pillar. DS of pillar.</p> <p>Cross along DS edge of stage. To audience. Gest: fix tie.</p> <p>Enter onto stage DL. X to C. to guide.</p> <p>X to packing, which is slightly UL. Tug on the strap once. Tug again, more vigorously. Tug once more very vigorously. Throw it down,</p>
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<p>You call that packing? If the strap breaks ...</p> <p>...What, you dare to contradict me... ...you've been giving the personnel ideas.</p> <p>You'd like to know wouldn't you.</p> <p>Well, you're discharged. (guide: but you can't discharge me half way.)</p> <p>You're lucky if I don't report you to the employment office in Urga. Here are your wages, as of now.</p> <p>You're a witness: I've paid this man his wages. I can tell you right now you better not show yourself in Urga. You'll never get anywhere in life.</p> <p>I'm pushing on immediately. If anything happens to me, you can testify that I left here today with this man. She doesn't understand. There isn't a soul who'll be able to say where I've gone. And the worst of it is that these scoundrels know it.</p> <p>Give this letter to the men who will be arriving tomorrow and are also on their way to Urga. I'm going on along with my porter. (innkeeper: but he's not a guide.) So she <i>does</i> understand. A minute ago she pretended not to. She knows the score. She doesn't want to be a witness in a thing like this. Explain the route to Urga to my porter.</p> <p>I can see that I'm in for a fight. The strong man fights and the sick man dies...</p> <p>Do you know the way yet? (coolie: yes, sir) Let's go then.</p>	<p>violently.</p> <p>In his face. Gesture to coolie.</p> <p>X to coolie, drop a fake elbow on him, mocking their previous action. Guide laughs. Up to him. He approaches me.</p> <p>Back up. Take money out of breast pocket, throw it on the ground. Turn DR. Trip over coolie. Get up, dust off. Turn to innkeeper. Turn to guide. Real big from across the room. Size him up. With disgust.</p> <p>Turn to innkeeper. Approach her DR. Gesture to coolie. (she eats a frito) X SL. Stop. Gesture to these scoundrels.</p> <p>X US to baggage. Get out pen and paper. Write letter. X DR to innkeeper.</p> <p>Illustrative hand gestures like she's an idiot. Turn to guide. Turn back to her, amazed. X SL.</p> <p>Stop. Approach her. Pause. Give her money. X UL to baggage, walking briskly. To myself. At baggage. To audience.</p> <p>X to coolie CSL with baggage. Immediately, as if I didn't even hear him, tossing down baggage. Exit UL.</p> <p>While offstage, put water bottle in pocket.</p>
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<p>How carefree this coolie is... I never liked that guide. One minute he was rude...</p> <p>How can you sing and be so cheerful, my friend...</p> <p>I don't care for you singing... He wouldn't defend himself for one second...</p> <p>...he's got nothing to laugh about but he laughs... What are you doing now?... ...You go first. It really is very easy to see the tracks in this sand. Actually it would be a good idea to wipe our tracks away.</p> <p>We've got to cross...</p> <p>(coolie: we must look for a for or a boat) That would take too long.</p> <p>What you lack is an overall grasp of the situation...</p>	<p>Sound Cue, "In a dangerous region" and JDilla beat Enter UL on coolie's back. He is bouncing to the beat, and singing. We X DS, turn SR. To audience: Pat him on the head, speak to him:</p> <p>We X SR, turn US. Pat him on the head, to him. We move US. Jump off his back at C, drive him SL.</p> <p>Turn DS to audience. X along DS edge toward SR during speech, and then cross up SR edge, cross along US edge, to audience all the time, building in rhythm and drive and paranoia, and paying attention subtly to his action. Hear him laugh. Turn him, UL by now. Gesture him toward DR. We start move DR, I behind him. Notice the ground. Speak as if it were my idea. Start to wipe away with leg sweeps, right, left, right, left, start to get into a groove, to the music, forget about the tracks. Look at him, in time, clap twice "one two," as a signal to him. We do the electric slide for a moment: forward with left, forward with right, kick up with right, turn body, land. Start to do it again, notice audience, straighten up fix tie, gesture sternly for him to keep moving (all very quickly). We exit DR, move into the audience, X up House Left aisle, to second or third row (depending on how the audience looked on a particular evening), move up it. He stops after the row, gesture for him to keep going. X to US bank, to second of third row. Move up it. End up at UL entrance.</p> <p>Sound cue, "by the raging torrent," Step onstage. Dialogue here. Speech is hurried, urgent to cross the river (which is created by the ensemble), and cross it NOW. He goes to X SR, I grab him, spin him around, in his face. After he jumps onto UL barrel. Make him understand that this is the best thing for humanity. Really look at him. Talk to him like a dog, if he</p>
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I can't understand you. Obsessed with base considerations of gain, you have no interest in reaching Urga...

I know a better way. I'll stick my revolver in your back. Shall we bet whether you get across?

My money makes me fear the bandits and forget the river.

And so a man gets the better
Of desert and tumultuous stream
And gets the better of himself, of man, and
Thereby gains the oil that is needed.

But I told you you didn't have to pitch the tent today because you broke your arm crossing the river.
If I hadn't pulled you out, you'd have drowned.
I'm not to blame for your accident—that tree trunk could just as well have hit me.
But still, you had this accident while traveling with me. I have very little cash on me, but my bank is in

shows a glint of understanding, latch onto it. Boost him. Make it a cause for celebration.
Accuse him, let him see my sheer disappointment.

Move US of pillar. Take a drink of water.

He starts to X toward me, back up, circle pillar. Hang back US of pillar, watching him. When he bends over, pull out gun from shoulder holster, hold it up, move around SL of pillar, stick gun in his back.

Shove him into the river. Hold gun pointing toward him.

In his direction but to the audience:

After he gets across, the ensemble lines up, lying on the floor in front of me. I take out a dollar from my pocket and give it Garrett, who is at my feet. I lie down on top of them and that roll along the floor, transporting me to the opposite corner (DR) of the stage. Coolie is there, his arm broken. I get up, put my gun in its holster, and pull the coolie by his injured arm out from the grasp of the ensemble. I pull him several times, he yelps each time.
Pull once, then to audience:

Pull again.

Third pull, very big, all the way US.

Sound cue, Led Zeppelin and "the camping place."
Lie on the ground for a moment. Get to feet, rise slowly, use the UR pillar for support. When up, loosen tie a bit, take a drink of water.
Coolie has gone SL and started setting up the "tent" (other ensemble members). Watch him for a few beats work with his broken arm. He is clearly in pain. Half scolding/half appeasing:

He keeps working. Beat.

He slowly looks at me. Beat.

Beat. Turn SR facing audience.

Move cash from breast pocket to right trousers

<p>Urga. I'll give you money when we get there. (coolie: yes sir). That's curt answer. With every look he shows me that I've wronged him. These coolies are an underhand lot. You may lie down. Naturally his injury means less to him than it does to me. These beggars don't care whether they're injured or in good health. His kind can't look any further than the next bowl of soup. Sickly by nature, they don't care what happens to them.</p> <p>When we make a botch of something we throw it away, and they throw themselves away because they're botched. It takes a first-class product to fight.</p> <p>The strong man fights and the sick man dies And that's a good thing.</p> <p>The strong man has his helpers but no one helps the weak.</p> <p>Your man is on the skids, give him that one last kick. For that's a good thing. The winner will sit him down to beefsteak and pie.</p> <p>That's a good thing. And the cook will not count the ones who've died in the fight.</p> <p>He does the right thing.</p> <p>And the God of things the way they are made lord and slave. It was a good thing And if you're in good, you're good; and if you're in</p>	<p>pocket. Turn to him. Turn SR. Speak to audience.</p> <p>Turn to him. Turn back to audience.</p> <p>Start to X DS, speaking to audience, looking at them, and using my focus to refer to him. Make my way closer to the audience. Find an empty front row seat next to someone, if none, find a particular audience member and kneel in front of them. Speak to them as if to say, "isn't this just so sad." Touch them on the knee on "we" gesture to audience member as if "you and me." Gesture to him with a shake of the head.</p> <p>Stand up, pat them on the back, again as if "like you and me." Wink or nod or thank them subtly and quickly. Continue moving along DS edge toward SL. During this speech, circle the entire stage, outside of the pillars, building in celebration and intensity, nearly mad with emphasis. This is like a rally—I am Hitler riling up the masses to come along with me. Point to an audience member as if to say, "I know YOU know what I mean."</p> <p>Gesture to coolie. Mimic a sickly person. Turn UL corner by now. Kick the ground hard. Another and another, the next more quick and violent than the last. Hop up to sit on UR barrel, gesture with arms and body as if I were a gluttonous fat man shoving his gluttonous fat face with armfuls of succulent beefsteak and pie. Hop down.</p> <p>Hack and cough and whither like a pathetic weakling. Straighten up, point to audience member as if, "you should take a note from that cook." Turn DR pillar. Come onstage slightly, kneel, give the sign of the cross, then point at wink at my guy, God. Stand up, out to audience,</p>
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<p>bad, you're bad.</p> <p>And that's a good thing.</p> <p>He's been listening. Halt! Don't move! What do you want?... ...You go into the tent! I'll sit here, I'm used to the fresh air. I wish I knew how much of my speech he heard.</p> <p>What can he be doing now? He's still fiddling around.</p> <p>I'd be a fool not to take precautions. It's stupid to trust anyone...</p> <p>...actually I'd be better of sitting in the tent, here in the open I might get sick. But what sickness is as dangerous as a man....</p> <p>...I wish I knew what he was plotting in there. I'd be a fool to into that tent.</p>	<p>On second you're bad, gesture to someone in the audience, give the high sign across the neck, hold out "baaaaaaaaaaad."</p> <p>Turn DL pillar, notice the coolie is standing right there. Pull back around, hide, fix tie, to audience Back around to coolie, move onstage, DL.</p> <p>Gesture the coolie into the tent.</p> <p>Step DS to audience. Step onstage, toward coolie in tent, positioned L and U of C.</p> <p>Start to fix coat, button it up, dust off, straighten up, whilst looking at the tent suspiciously. During this speech, let my paranoia drive me in circles, larger to smaller. Speaking more to myself than to the audience, I am trying with all my cognitive might to figure out what to do. Its as if I just let the audience in on my quest for answers. Once in a while I gesture to them as if, "I'm right, aren't I right?" Or, "can it actually be?"</p> <p>Start to move toward the tent. STOP! Continue the circles till I am all twisted next to the tent. Gesture of desperation. Curl up on the ground, hugging myself, prepared for a very cold night in the desert, my body shaking.</p> <p>Light cue, from cool dark and purple to blisteringly bright yellow and gold. Sink down with weary body. Get to feet, rise slowly weighed down by a million pounds of dry hot dust, loosen tie almost completely, unbutton coat, try to get a little saliva onto my parched, chapped, bone-dry lips. Walk wearily toward the coolie, UL. Grab beating stick from him. Turn around, half-asses gesture for him to go first. He leads I follow, walking very slowly, very wearily, in a ba-dum..ba-dum..ba-dum pattern with my feel, right-left, right-left. It takes us days to cross the desert to the other side of the stage. He stops, I run into his back, immediately my head snaps up and:</p>
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<p>Why are you stopping?... ...Keep going!... ...No.</p> <p>Where do you think you're going? Now we're heading North, east is over there. What's got into you? Why don't you look me in the eye? (coolie: I thought this was east.) Just wait you bastard! I'll teach you how to guide me. Now do you know which way is east. (coolie: not on my arm) Which way is east.</p> <p>(that way) And where are the water holes. (that way) That way? But you were going that way? (No sir.) Oh, you weren't going that way? Where you going that way? (yes, sir) Where are the water-holes? But you just said you knew where the water holes were? Do you know? (yes) Do you know? (no) Do! You! Know! (no!)</p> <p>Give me your water bottle. Now I could take the attitude that all the water belongs to me, because you've guided me wrong.</p> <p>But I won't. I'll share the water with you. Take your swallow then we'll go on.</p>	<p>Our dialogue happens DR. Make like I'll hit him with the beating stick. Push him on. We continue on, out into the House left seating bank, he turns to go up the row we went up before. Gesture towards House right. He keeps moving down the aisle. I follow him, trying to get to him.</p> <p>He continues on.</p> <p>Hit him in the back with the beating stick. He stumbles onto the stage going SL</p> <p>Head onto stage, coming at him with stick brandished, hit him harder. My hitting him drives us to CS Hit him harder.</p> <p>Hit him. Gesture US, hit him harder on the rebound.</p> <p>Beside myself with rage, I hit him again. Gesture DS, hit him again on the rebound.</p> <p>Hit him.</p> <p>Hit him. Harder.</p> <p>Harder.</p> <p>Harder. Harder. Harder. These hits drive him from being hunched over all the way to the ground.</p> <p>Throw down the stick. Wrench the canteen out of his pocket.</p> <p>Notice the audience. They have been watching the whole time. They found me out. I'm done for. Take a drink. Hand him the canteen. He takes a drink. Make sure he doesn't take too much. Grab canteen from him, pick up beating stick, hold</p>
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<p>I forgot myself. I shouldn't have beaten him in this situation.</p> <p>We've been here before. Look our tracks. Pitch the tent. Our bottle is empty. There's nothing in my bottle. I mustn't let him notice that I've still got water. If he does and he has a glimmer of sense in that skull of his, he'll strike me dead. If he comes near me, I'll shoot.</p> <p>If we could only get to the last water-hole! It's as if I had a rope around my neck. How long can a man hold out against thirst?</p> <p>Drop that stone!</p> <p>I was right! You beast!</p> <p>That's what you get.</p> <p>("the court") ...(guide: I'll think about your advice.) (judge: you are also demanding damages) (judge: did you shoot the man?) Yes. He attacked me unawares...</p>	<p>them close to me. Turn US to audience. Take a few steps toward them. Helpless.</p> <p>While I do this, the coolie moves DS and is still hunched over. I turn around and walk toward him, and collapse onto his hunched back. I also hand him the canteen. He turns around and carries me directly up stage. Light cue: desert night. I point with the beating stick to the ground. I slide off his back barely hold myself upright. Half-assed hit with stick. Couldn't hurt a fly. Turn DS and move three steps toward DR pillar. To audience. Pull water bottle out of pocket.</p> <p>Pull gun out of holster. Move to DR pillar, lean against it, slide down to sitting. Put beating stick down. Feigning near-death.</p> <p>Take a large swallow from the bottle. Put it down. Hold gun in a ready position at my side. Lay head against pillar. Coolie approaches with his water bottle. I notice movement and stand up, spinning in his direction with gun pointed right at him. He moves closer, lifting his "stone" toward me. Sound cue: gunshot, react physically immediately. Sound cue: gunshot, react again immediately. Lower gun to side. Turn around completely, look at the audience. Put gun back in holster. Exit DR, grabbing stick and bottle on my way out.</p> <p>While off stage, fix tie and coat and hair. Make myself presentable.</p> <p>Enter DR. climb onto DR barrel, kneel, sit, facing the court, positioned UL. A sound on an exhalation, "pf"</p> <p>Coldly and without hesitation.</p>
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<p>(judge: then you must have driven your men) I didn't drive anyone. That was up to the guide.</p> <p>(guide: if anything, less)</p> <p>(judge: and after that did anything happen that might account for the coolie's attack on you?) No, not on my part. (judge: look here, don't make yourself out to be more innocent than you are... ...use your head!) There's something I've got to admit. I hit him Once. (judge: aha, and you think once was enough to provoke such hatred in the coolie.) No, also held my revolver to his back when he didn't want to cross the river. And in crossing the river he broke his arm. I was to blame for that, too. (judge: in the coolie's opinion.) Of course. Actually I pulled him out. (judge: you see. After the guide had been dismissed, you gave the coolie reason to hate you.)...</p> <p>...(innkeeper: yes. Then comes the uninhabited desert of Yahi)...</p> <p>Another thing: he kept singing as he went along. But after I threatened him with my revolver to make him cross the river, I never heard him sing again... ...(judge: you're fighting your war and we're fighting your war.)</p> <p>I have another admission to make. When we got lost, I shared one bottle of water with him, but I started to drink the second by myself. (judge: did he see you drinking) I supposed he had when he came toward me with a stone in his hand. I knew he hated me. Once we had entered the uninhabited zone, I was on my guard day and night. I was obliged to assume that he'd attack me at the first opportunity. If I hadn't killed him, he would have killed me. (widow: I wish to say something. He could not have</p>	<p>Bitingly, and given at the guide.</p> <p>A bitter, agreeing "ha."</p> <p>Playing the innocent. A questioning look.</p> <p>A knowing look and a thankful nod. Rising up on top of the barrel. Beat.</p> <p>Catching on.</p> <p>Look at the widowed wife. Back to the judge. Emphatic nod. Sit back down.</p> <p>An appreciative nod to the innkeeper and a wink that says, "you will be gratified."</p> <p>Stand up on pillar.</p> <p>A hearty laugh along with the judge.</p> <p>A put-on attitude of "oh I'm so ashamed."</p> <p>"of course, thank you."</p> <p>She comes at me fiercely. I back up on the barrel</p>
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attacked him. He never attacked anyone.)...

(judge: is this the stone? Do you recognize it?)
Yes that's the stone.

It must have been a stone.

(judge: not it wasn't a stone. You can see that it was a water bottle)...

...Then he must have been very stupid. The man had been injured by me possibly for the rest of his life. His arm! He had every reason to want to pay me back.

(guide: he had every reason.)

For little money he traveled with me who has much money. But the journey was equally hard on both of us.

(guide: so he knows that.)

When he was tired he was beaten.

(guide: and that wasn't right?)

To suppose the coolie wouldn't strike me dead at the first opportunity would have been to suppose he had no sense.

(judge: you mean you correctly assumed...

...you had no way of knowing that the coolie was the exception!)

We must go be the rule, not by the exception.

(judge: that's it. What motive can that coolie have had for giving his tormentor water...

...we will now deliberate.)

(...guide: holds out his cup to a fellow man, and a wolf drinks.)

with a apathetic attitude. The leader of the second caravan and their guide keep her away from me. I nod thankfully at the leader.

The guide then pours water out of the stone. I am taken aback. The guide gives a speech as he moves around the court. I look at him with fury.

Stay focused on the judges. It is aggravating when the guide butts it, but he is unimportant—stick the judges.

Loosen tie.

Bring my center downward, while still on the barrel, while my intention goes upward, my arms go upward as well. This is a key moment of the play, a key discovery for the characters. Very big.

Hop down off barrel, straighten tie go around pillar, US, exit to DR offstage area, still visible. Smoke cigarette. Pull cigarette out of pocket, put it in my mouth, "match gesture"—bring left hand outward, position right hand and fingers onto hand, bring right arm down ward as in a match strike. Bring to cigarette. Toss it away. Smoke it.

Come around pillar (US side), into light on "wolf" Come into court room, sit on barrel, one leg off the ground.

(judge: the court wishes to ask you one more question.
Had you anything to gain by shooting the coolie?)
On the contrary. I needed him for the business I was planning in Urga. He was carrying the maps charts I needed. I was unable to carry my baggage by myself.
(judge: then you didn't do your business in Urga?)
Of course not, I'm ruined.
(judge: now I will deliver the verdict...
...Nay more, men of his kind, with their limited and one-sided approach...
...the accused is therefore acquitted, the complaint of the dead man's widow is dismissed.)

Get off pillar, stand attentive to the judges.

Step forward.

Flippantly.

Stay focused on the judges.

Look at the coolie of the second caravan. He has a ill-boding look in his eye.

Give a celebratory look to the leader of the second caravan.

Walk to C toward the judges, button up coat.

The coolie of the second caravan attacks me from behind.

Sound cue, "Bombs over Baghdad."

He puts me in a headlock, I reach up to his head and pull of his America bandana.

A judge pulls me out of his grasp. The widow comes to punch me while the judge is holding me from behind. I move out of the way. There is chaos, people fighting each other all over the place. I walk to C and look bemusedly at the chaos. The guide of the second caravan gets into my space, I "punch him in the face," that is, I put my left hand on his shoulder, and swing my right, which still has the bandana in it, past his face and hit my hand. He falls down. I turn around, to face SR, a judge runs past me. The innkeeper gets into my space, I "punch" her, as well, facing DS. She falls down. Everyone is fallen but me.

Sound cue, "slow string music." Light change.

I look out in the infinite distance, facing DS. I drop the American flag bandana.

Reuben enters DL, cross US along the SL edge, very slowly. The center of my body follows with him, pointing about 2 feet behind him. This causes me to slowly turn while he slowly crosses. I take my glasses off, slowly, of course, and put them in my breast pocket. He stops UL to gaze at carnage. I stop, as well. He continues, I continue to turn. He crosses along US edge. He stops UR pillar at his widow. He sinks down along the pillar. I sink in the center. Lights fade.

Lights come up slightly brighter. We all rise together. Stand a moment. The house lights come up. We walk to our individual audience sections. Mine was in the DS seating bank, all the way SR. I give my improvised epilogue, thank them for coming and exit UL.

CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION

There are certain moments in the play where specific physical choices were made to put the relationships into a social context. For instance, my riding in on Reuben's back was not only a striking image or even humorous but also exemplified the oppression of the coolie by the merchant. It became more than just an image or an illustration of the relationship, more than a metaphor. It was the relationship itself in the image.

In several instances where I hand dollar bills as bribes to other members of the cast to do something, like the police, the innkeeper and even the river. These moments, especially the paying of a member of the ensemble in the river, show the merchant's complete control over the environment in which he and the coolie operate. This is very in line with the ideals that Brecht has of his characters. They are not victims of their world, nature, or fate. Instead, it is the actions of men that have the greatest impact in the plays.

Another instance comes in "The Camping Place" scene. It is night in the desert and after a lengthy, very paranoid monologue, there is an image of me tangled up and twisted sitting down outside the tent in which the coolie is lying peacefully asleep. This image and preceding monologue illuminate the social context in that the merchant may be mercilessly using the coolie for his own personal gain, yet in such close quarters he cannot let his guard down for fear of what the coolie might do. This shows that the merchant is well aware of the wrongs he does to the coolie and lets us into the psychology of the two characters. The merchant is so driven and destructive, that his own greed will not let him go to sleep. The coolie, however, is able to get rest.

The scene where I beat Reuben relentlessly became something bigger than the merchant beating the coolie. In this scene not only was the merchant/coolie social relationship examined but also issues of violence, racism, and torture resonated loudly. It was also the most emotionally powerful scene in the play. I was “beside (my)self with rage” as Brecht himself indicates in the stage directions while Reuben was writhing in pain.

Theatre is an emotional experience. I am not opposed, as Brecht seemed to have been, to theatre that is emotionally driven. However, most of it ignores the social aspect of theatre. My work with Brecht has helped me to recognize that. Realizing the emotional and sociological capacity of acting has been revelatory. While I now have more responsibility in creating an emotional experience while illuminating and exploring the social relationships of the play, I now am able to put them both to use. I can use them both in conjunction with one another, or disjunction and see what comes of it. I was certainly able to do this before this experience, but Brecht has put it in my consciousness.

That is the biggest thing I will take from this experience: consciousness. It is imperative that an actor be conscious of what he puts onstage. It is also imperative that an actor know how he made a choice, where it came from and what it means. The most important thing we do is tell the story. If I am conscious of what I am doing physically, emotionally and socially and if I am aware of how the story affects my society, I will be able to communicate the story much more clearly.

I find Brecht’s work stimulating, illuminating and elevating. Perhaps I feel this way because that’s how he himself described it. More than all of this I also find it empowering to the audience. His theatre does not take the audience for granted, or treat

them as inferiors. Nor does it seem to me like the artists are bestowing something unto the audience. Rather, the artists are sharing something with the audience. They are inviting the audience to ask questions with them, to try to figure out what the problem is, and then act on it. It exists for the greater good of humanity.

Stanislavsky saw theatre as a mirror with which to reflect the world. Brecht saw it as a hammer with which to shape it. I believe that an actor must know how his role exists on both levels and then question it. And never stop questioning.

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