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Torture and fear as tools for maintaining power in *The Germophobe*: a thesis on creating a one-man show from the author-actor himself

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TORTURE AND FEAR AS TOOLS FOR MAINTAINING POWER IN THE GERMOPHOBE:
A THESIS ON CREATING A ONE-MAN SHOW FROM THE AUTHOR-ACTOR HIMSELF

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
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B.A., Macalester College, 2008
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iii
CHAPTER	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. A TOPIC	2
3. FURTHER SOURCE MATERIAL	6
4. IMPROVISATION VIDEO'S TRANSCRIPTION	7
5. A GROWING TEXT	13
6. CONVERSION INTO VERSE	16
7. THE TRIPTOCLES EXAMPLE	19
8. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PROFESSOR GEORGE JUDY.....	24
9. THE FINAL SCRIPT	26
10. THE PERFORMANCE.....	39
11. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAY	40
12. CONCLUSION	41
REFERENCES	42
APPENDIX: VIDEO RECORDING HYPERLINKS	43
VITA	44

ABSTRACT

The project was to create a 20-45 minute one-man show and stage it. This thesis describes the process of creation and documents the project's multiple permutations from the search for a topic and setting parameters, to research, initial improvisation experiments, to a growing and reorganizing text, to the conversion into verse, to the final script, the performance, and planned future development. The resulting show is about a man whose irrational fear of germs has ballooned out into an irrational fear of the outside world, fear of being infected, and affected by foreign things and ideas. This fear drives him to maintain strict control over his imagined world populated by household items whom he interacts with as if they were living, breathing, speaking human beings. He resorts to torture in order to extract information from unruly subjects, but this time he makes a mistake (in torturing a tin can), and tortures the wrong subject to death. This begins a rift, between him and his trusted advisor (a bottle of hand sanitizer called Phil) that threatens to destroy his entire fantasy world. The full title is

The Germophobe

Or

The fantastical journey of Edward G. Braithwaight III

As leader of human kind's last hope for victory over

The subversive tactics of botulism

(and their microscopic allies)

to overturn the world order

and deny us all the rights

of Life, liberty and the pursuit of cheese

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The goal is to create a one –man show that can be used in the future for an actor showcase, but also challenge myself to create something of weight and content that would stretch my abilities as an actor. In the past I have been told that my work is very funny, but it often lacks that deeper grounding in genuine emotional truth. With this project I wanted to create an entertaining piece of theatre that also accesses that emotional truth. Creating a piece of theatre about a topic I feel strongly about was absolutely necessary, and the search for a topic is where my journey began.

CHAPTER 2: A TOPIC

From the beginning I wanted to play only one character. In a previous one-man show project I had played multiple cartoon characters in dialogue with each other, so I knew full well I could do that, and wanted to try something new. With multiple characters the trap for the performance is for it all to play at a superficial level, and I did not want that to happen for this project. However, if I only played one character how would I create scenes with multiple characters? What situation would justify having only one actor playing one character onstage?

With this in mind I found myself drawn to two particular sources for my initial topic. An article titled *The Predator War* by Jane Mayer, and a book titled *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* by Slavoj Žižek. In the first, two quotes grabbed my attention. The first quote is listed here.

“The first two C.I.A. (predator drone) air strikes of the Obama Administration took place on the morning of January 23rd...bombings, in Pakistan, had killed an estimated twenty people. In one strike, four Arabs, all likely affiliated with Al Qaeda, died. But in the second strike a drone targeted the wrong house, hitting the residence of a pro-government tribal leader....The blast killed the tribal leader’s entire family, including three children, one of them five years old.”¹

This story illustrated to me, that despite the ease and precision of killing a perceived threat the use of a predator drone affords, the risk is ever present that a mistake will void those possible gains and make a situation worse. The second quote from this article, itself a quote from Mary Dudziak summed up an issue with the use of predator drones:

“Drones are a technological step that further isolates the American people from military action, undermining political checks on...endless war.”²

Although the work as performed has no overt reference to the use of predator drones, or some similar device, these quotes heavily influenced my initial idea, and the performance. I decided that to reference the use of predator drone technology well I would need to use projections and sounds, and at the time I simply did not have the expertise, nor the time to work with those aspects. However, these quotes represent two ideas that did make it into the final script, namely a killing for gain that goes wrong, and isolation that perpetuates an endless war.

My second initial source was the most influential of the two. Throughout this work Žižek discusses fantasy and the perception of reality in order to contextualize and describe our

¹ Mayer, Jane. THE PREDATOR WAR. THE NEW YORKER, October 26, 2009. Page, 37.

² Mayer, Jane. THE PREDATOR WAR. THE NEW YORKER, October 26, 2009. Page, 40.

world in the early post 9/11 epoch. Several quotes from it had a strong effect on my initial idea, and the main conceit of the play. My first quote is here.

“Virtual Reality ...provides reality itself deprived of its substance, of the hard resistant kernel of the Real – just as decaffeinated coffee smells and tastes like real coffee without being real coffee, Virtual Reality is experienced as reality without being so.”³

With this in mind I wanted to create a character that experiences reality differently than an “average person.” I did not want it to be a “virtual reality,” that is something imposed upon his senses from the outside, but a fantasy grounded in his own flawed facultative reasoning: he is no longer capable of certain kinds of reasoning. This would be a person living a fantasy as if it was reality, but what would the nature of that reality be? My second quote from this source addresses this.

“We are entering a new era of paranoiac warfare in which the greatest task will be to identify the enemy and his weapons. In this new warfare, the agents assume their acts less and less publicly...state measures themselves are clouded in a shroud of secrecy –all this forming an ideal breeding-ground for conspiracy theories and generalized social paranoia”⁴

My character would live in a kind of paranoid delusion inhabited by invisible enemies trying to kill him at any opportunity. This is of course very extreme, but what should drive someone to this? I found the answer in a personal anecdote contextualized by my next quote from Žižek on the psychoanalytic idea of ‘traversing the fantasy.’

“In our daily existence, we are immersed in ‘reality’ (structured and supported by the fantasy), and this immersion is disturbed by symptoms which bear witness to the fact that another, repressed, level of our psyche resists this immersion. To ‘traverse the fantasy’ therefore, paradoxically, means *fully identifying oneself with the fantasy*—namely, with the fantasy which structures the excess that resists our immersion in daily reality.”⁵

With this quote in mind I found myself thinking back to the summer of 2009. I had recently finished my first year of study at LSU, and began rehearsal at the Illinois Shakespeare Festival. Within a week I had become very sick with a persistent cough, low energy, and a staph infection on my left cheek. I went to the doctor, received medications, applied ointments regularly, and was afraid of touching my fellow actors in rehearsal for fear of spreading the staph to them. I eventually got better, but afterwards found myself trying to minimize touching objects and people, and if I did I applied hand sanitizer to my hands right afterward without

³ Žižek, Slavoj. WELCOME TO THE DESERT OF THE REAL. Verso 2002. Page, 11.

⁴ Žižek, Slavoj. Page, 37.

⁵ Žižek, Slavoj. Page, 17.

question. Although I had exhibited this behavior before my ordeal, afterwards it had become a full-fledged ritual. I even applied rubbing alcohol on my cheek to try to kill whatever stray staph had still survived. Yet, even though I knew that staph was already everywhere, on our skin, in our noses, and could not be eradicated, I still sought, irrationally, to kill it wherever it might be around me. This was my own experience of 'Traversing the Fantasy.' My 'fantasy' that I could prevent sickness, through rituals of sanitation, I more fully identified myself with after my staph infection than before. The experience had driven me to more 'fantasy-driven' behavior.

This gave me material to build my main conceit. My piece would be about an individual who cuts himself off from all possible infection, and strongly identifies with the fantasy that he can keep germs from coming in contact with him. He's a germophobe whose past experience with infection has made him 'traverse the Fantasy' to an absurd degree. He fears an unseen enemy, and converses with inanimate objects as if they were people who answer back.

On June 11 2010 at 6:38pm I typed the initial idea on my iPod notes application. I've included it below in a format I hope closely approximates that of the note-taking program I used. It is:

One man show idea
The germophobe
One man's struggle to over come
fear of just about everything.
Especially the outside world.
Video projection of friends and
family speaking to him through
video.
Love of a woman is what brings
him out. She awakens in him the
desire to leave his room of
safety and interact with people
and places as a physical being.
Fear of the outside world.
Agoraphobia. News and current
events weaved in, and yet he
decides to jump in for love.

His best friend is a large bottle
of hand sanitizer named fil. Fil
has large googly eyes attached
to him. Our protagonist talks to
him

Protagonist convinced that in
order to stem the infection on

the world he has to lock himself up and watch the world, and when necessary destroy infected people.

When he cuts himself and rubs hand sanitizer in it, it burns. When there is a risk of infection you have to sterilize the wound. It may hurt a lot while you're doing it, but in the end it's for a good cause. This is the same logic he uses when he kills one of his family members with a predator-drone-like device he builds in the course of the play to monitor the infection.

He has a fight with Fil. Fil plays devil's advocate one too many times, and protagonist knocks him over tears off his eyes and drinks him. Gets drunk and laments that he had to kill his best friend in a fight because he was becoming mentally unstable, and therefore dangerous to their work.

"I loved you like a brother"

This is a precipitous decline moment. After this it gets really ugly.

Split it up with Brechtian Elements make episodes.

Although filled with several elements that I chose ultimately to leave out of the final project (giving Fil googly eyes being one), this is the seed from which my show would grow, but before it could I would need a bed of research to flesh out this idea into a fully realized show. That is the topic of my next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: FURTHER SOURCE MATERIAL

In my search for further source material I found myself drawn to a collection of essays on the rise and fall of the Philippine President/Dictator Ferdinand Marcos called CRISIS IN THE PHILIPPINES. A particular chapter titled 'POLITICS IN THE MARCOS ERA' drew my attention, and proved useful for building my character as a tyrannical dictator.

“Increasingly, he [Marcos] was prone to draw a firm distinction between supporters and enemies.... against whom extreme measures were justified.”⁶

This seemed to be something I could incorporate into a paranoid character framework. Having a character justify extreme measures for fear of infection from germs seemed to be a good place to take my show. This next quote is what began bringing my show into focus.

“As unsolved kidnappings continued, and bombs exploded late at night in empty buildings, both Senator Diokno and Aquino charged that Marcos was using if not creating incidents as a justification for perpetuating his power.”⁷

This is what my show would be about: justification for perpetuating power. I would show an example of a dictator taking extreme measures and then using incidents (perhaps even generated from his extreme measures) to justify the perpetuation of his power. What kind of incidents would these be? The answer is what solidified the message of my show. Below is what I would seek to say with it:

One of the most extreme measures to perpetuate power is the use of torture. Torture at its heart is imposing suffering on a person in an effort to establish and maintain power over them and others through fear of the same or worse suffering. Perhaps more effective is the threat, or possibility of torture. A person left to imagine what tortures might be in store for them is a person in fear, and therefore a person in the power of the torturing entity. Torture is a good tool for deterring people from getting tortured. Torture is not a good tool for gaining truthful information. A tortured individual will usually present anything as truth as long as it stops the torture, and in the case that an unusually truthful person is tortured they may not be believed because: a) the torturer may recognize that there is no incentive to tell the truth, or b) the torturer may not receive the truthful information they desire. In either case the torturer may conclude that the individual being tortured is lying and therefore worthy of continued torture.

Although I cannot quote directly with certainty something that definitely influenced me from this work, I must also say that Kurt Vonnegut's posthumously published collection of short stories called ARMAGEDDON IN RETROSPECT was something that had a profound effect on me during the creation process. The grotesquely absurd humor, and sarcastic disgust I found in some stories, as well as the possibility of justice I found in others is something I sought to emulate in my show. Now I could begin.

⁶ Bresnan, John. CRISIS IN THE PHILIPPINES. Princeton University Press. Page, 82.

⁷ Bresnan, John. Page, 83-84

CHAPTER 4: IMPROVISATION VIDEO'S TRANSCRIPTION

In order to get my creative juices flowing I decided to video record myself on my laptop improvising a story. I then transcribed that exercise and used that as the starting point for my text. That transcript is below.

(Germophobe sitting in chair realizes he is alone.)

Phil?

(Looks for something to sanitize himself against the oncoming army of germs. Sees a can of Lysol that is just out of reach.)

Phil?

(Attempts to grab it without getting out of the chair. Attempts multiple times, twists and turns, writhes and groans, but to no avail.)

Phil!

(Makes one last valiant effort and fall out of the chair, rolls all over the floor, then wades through the germs to the can of Lysol, and sprays himself all over. Lays on the floor for a moment before getting up and walking to Phil)

Phil, why didn't you help me? I was sitting there all alone when those germs ganged up on me. I could've been severely injured. They could have had lethal weapons. I almost had a serious complication. Phil, next time you have to be there for me. How are we gonna fight them off if when I need you you're not here?

Phil, we're not gonna go back out there.

Do you know what's out there Phil?

Germs are what's out there Phil.

Lots and lots of tiny Microbes sitting there and waiting for their moment to attack, to lash out, to grapple on to you and never let go until you're dead, Phil. That's what's out there. So we have to stay here until we're safe. We don't now how long that's gonna be Phil. (beat)

Germs aren't like us Phil. They don't have religion, they don't have politics, they don't have economies, they don't even have brains. They just sit there and wait. Wait for their opportunity, BOOM! Just like that, and you're dead.

Phil, do you remember what happened when we we're out there?

I got a staph infection on my face. On my face, of all places Phil.

I had no power over that. I couldn't keep that from happening.

It was quite an experience Phil, seeing myself being colonized, being taken over, being invaded by foreign bodies that want to consume me, un-create me. Now when you talk about health, out there we're talking about...Do you know what free radicals are Phil? Free radicals according to the "literature" are things that are created in your own body that destroy your body. Why would your body destroy itself, I don't understand that. They say that antioxidants will protect you from free radicals. Why antioxidants? What happened to anti-oxidents, huh? I don't see why we gotta be all up in arms about the anti-oxidants. Why we gotta be anti-oxident Phil? We got a good thing going here. No one ever talks about the anti-oxidents, its un-PC, its not to be talked about, its, uh, what am I saying here? It's controversial. Well Phil we are talking

about a very great controversy; the controversy of survival. Survival Phil, nothing less than that, is what's at stake. So I don't care, Phil, if you want to go back out. I am not gonna go there. That's dangerous beyond belief, so please Phil, don't ever ask me again.

Phil, what did I tell you? Am I not gonna convince you about this? Germs Phil, they invade people's bodies, they take them over. Germs. Germs that take over everything that we are, everything that we breathe, everything that we feel, we have them inside of us, just like that. We are in quarantine. This is a battle for survival Phil, and if you're not with it, you're against it, so I don't wanna hear anything about this. We are never leaving, never!

We're staying right here, where it's safe, where it's warm, we have enough food, we have clean air, and we have the freedom that we need to live the life that we can. That's what's at stake Phil, our very way of life, so don't, don't ask me again.

All right, so let's do...what? Phil you know what we have to do? But they're just...

All right, all right, I'll tell you a story, just one. We have work to do.
once upon a time

...

there was a man who tripped up the stairs.

Usually people trip down the stairs.

Curious, but in this case Physics was perfectly willing to make an exception.

Wow right?. What did this man do to earn such an honor?

Maybe it was his long sordid history/love affair with Physic's little sister Entropy that made him the exceptional target for the universal laws of governance I take it then Physics did not approve of this relationship,

or maybe it was his dabbling in intelligent design perhaps that's why,

But Physic's little sister will run you down, and in those cases you can see why he had to break it off. The whole thing was just a battle he couldn't win I take it.

That's just it! This exceptional punishment was so elegant.

In falling up the stairs he would just keep going.

Especially when he tripped on an escalator; he almost didn't survive.

So, how did he manage?

You'll have to ask him.

He's very private about the matter, but I would guess that in the aftermath of such a catastrophe he took things one-step at a time,

but what ever you do, do not mention M. C. Escher.

He will get very, very angry.

You'll know when you see his paintings. I love those paintings, but not this guy. I believe

Physics hired him to design a prison for our poor hero,

one made with padded steps so he can fall forever at a geometrically increasing speed, and not get injured. Oh, the agony never ends.

That'll teach him to mess with Entropy.

Almost like Sisyphus...except Sisyphus is having the time of his life:

he whistles the whole time he's pushing that rock up that hill, and rides the rock all the way down each time; more like the rock rides him, but let's put it this way...Sisyphus still doesn't know he'll never succeed.

Our Hero, for lack of a better name lets call him Triptocles, is in an ever- increasing state of nausea.

Sisyphus can take a break. Now are you with me here?

Gotcha. the difference is he has no hope

Our Hero Triptocles can't have hope.

Where as Sisyphus will chat your ear off the whole time, Triptocles hasn't talked to anyone in centuries. The only way you'd get him to get anything anywhere is to shove it in his pocket and push him over a staircase.

Give a man Hope, and he'll be happy forever doing just about anything.

Take away his self-control, and he'll end up a mess, and he won't do anything even if you ask pretty please.

But that's all stuff we'll talk about later.

So in summation, don't mess with Physics, or Physics will have fun with you. Lesson learned?

All right, so let's go do this. Where are the prisoners?

Hello there. You three have been accused of working for the enemy, of being spies, subversives, insurgents. Do you have anything to say for yourself, yourselves?

I'm waiting! Why don't you answer my questions? You were found in the wrong place, keeping watch on some very classified areas; the kitchen, the living room, the basement. What are you hiding?

Don't make me get mean. You don't want to see me when I'm mean.

Do you think this is a game? Do you think this is for my enjoyment? Do you think I like having soldiers in my midst who are not obedient? I love you people. I love you, but when you pull shit like this I feel like it's a slap in my face. In my face! Because I care so much, and you seem to care so little. I'm here for you, and yet you show no compassion, no thankfulness for how great I have been to you, so I want to know, what have you told the enemy? What have you done?

Ok, ok. That's the way we're gonna do it. Phil where's my can opener? (Sees can opener and picks it up) A few of you may be familiar with this particular device. It's a can opener. A brilliant little device used for so many novel events. A few of you, can of beans hi there, I believe you may have lost a few family members to a device such as this. Now if I don't hear what I need to hear, I'm going to have to use this.

I'm waiting.

Lets put it this way, you there, bottle of Windex, you carry can of bean's life in your hands. So you can either save him, and therefore yourself, by telling me what I need to hear, or you can't. The choice is yours.

All right, all right. Can of beans. (Picks up can of beans by the scruff of the neck)

(To Windex) You're making me do what I don't want to do, and I don't like that, but I need to know what I need to know and I need to know it now.

So...(clamps can opener on can of beans)

(To Windex) Oh no. No, no, no. You brought this on yourself bottle of Windex. You could have stopped this from happening. Can you hear that? Those are screams that you've created.

(Turns can opener)

You're still not gonna tell me what I need to hear are you? (Turns can opener some more)

How 'bout now huh, oh ooo. (Turns some can opener some more)
Look I can see his beans already. I can see them. I can see them. (Turns some more)
What now huh? Are you gonna tell me what I need to hear? (Twists opener) Tell me!
Why were you there? What do you know? (Twists opener).
Are you working for the Staph? For the MRSA Staph? You're working for them aren't you?
(Twists opener) And they're in league with Botulism, and they're in league with the dust
bunnies and their working for the E-coli.
He barely has a lid left bottle of Windex, what's it gonna be?
Don't tell me you don't know. I know you know.
Don't give me that shit. (Rips off Can of beans lid)

Look at that. Thing of beauty isn't it? Isn't it? (Drops lid at Windex's feet)
Well bottle of Windex, that lid is your souvenir.
Look, he passed out. Is he still breathing? Hmm. Can't really tell.
You have one last chance, bottle of Windex.
Alright. (Pours Beans on Bottle of Windex, then tosses Bean can to floor, and stomps on it)
I just crushed your comrade in arms. Don't think I won't do it to you too.
I'll be back to morrow, and maybe then you'll tell me the truth. Good night.
(Goes to Phil)

Phil look at this, I seem to have gotten some traitor bean juice on my hands. Phil could you help me out here?

What do you mean Phil?

Phil, I'm not being unfair here. Look what I go. I gotta get this off. Phil.

Phil. What I did was necessary, necessary for our security Phil.

Any day now that bottle of Windex is going to crack, and he's gonna spill all his guts all over the place, and then we'll know Phil. We'll know where the leak is, but until then Phil we have to do what we have to do to get what we need. Gotta do what you gotta do Phil, and right now what you gotta do is give me some hand sanitizer so I can clean this off.

Yes Phil, Windex and his siblings are very strong willed; they always wanted to gloss things over. I submerged his brother in water. He was a poor diluted fool.

Phil, Phil I'm leveling with you here. Don't play any games with me. I gotta get this off Phil.

You gotta help me.

Phil, Phil what are you...

You want us to leave, ok, ok. Phil, I wasn't gonna tell you this, but I plan to leave ok, but I'm not gonna tell it to you. I'm not gonna give you any details until you help me with this. Ok? Do we have a deal Phil?

Thank you. (Dispenses hand sanitizer from Phil)

(Interrupting Phil) ah, ah, ah, ah.

(Cleans hands very methodically getting each individual finger and crevice)

Ok, ok. Something I've been thinking about for a long time Phil. I know before I said we're gonna stay here for as long as it takes. We do have control over how long it takes, however minute it may be. We may not be able to survive if the germs get us Phil, but we can destroy germs. What we can do is use some advanced medical techniques, Phil, to eradicate bad, terrible, very dangerous microbes and their hosts through the planet. By doing this Phil, we will

make the world once again safe for us. Now I have just this plan. It's called a thermal bomb. What it'll do is it'll cover the earth in a layer of sanitizing flame, and destroy all microorganisms, and their hosts, so that we can come up on the other side safe. We're protected her Phil. This shelter is miles beneath the earth. Well, not miles, we, it's gonna work Phil. We're not that far from the surface of the earth, but it's gonna work, just believe me here. Ok? Just believe me. So, we're going to destroy all the germs. Yes Phil, some people will die, but that is the cost of progress. We can't save everyone. We can't save anyone except ourselves. The ones who are truly deserving of being saved. So Phil, what we're going to do is cleanse the world. I have a thermal bomb, I'm going to use it, and we'll be safe again. We'll be able to go out there, and play.

Phil, we had a deal. You help me clean my hands and we're going to get out. Deal is set. Please, don't look so enthused.

Phil, why...it's the best possible solution Phil. It's the final solution. You don't agree? Ok, alright, alright. Phil, I'm sorry, but I'm going to have to use my executive decision on this one. Phil, I think you should stop this line of questioning. Phil, I'm getting angry now. Don't make me angry Phil.

Would you stop me from doing what is needed Phil? Are you that deranged that you are willing to sacrifice what we have for that? They're out there Phil, sitting and waiting for their time to destroy us, to destroy everything we own, and we have to destroy them before they destroy us, Phil. That's the only way it's going to work; preemptively. If you don't agree with that Phil, then you're against it, and I'm sorry. I'm sorry Phil. I'm sorry that I have to do this.

(Grabs Phil, unscrews his top, and pours him out.)

(Crying)Phil, you made me do it. You made me do it Phil. I didn't want to do it Phil. I didn't want to do it.

Are you happy germs? Are you happy? You've made me kill my friend. You've convinced him, you've turned him, you've changed him, into this. I didn't kill him. You did, all of you germs, and now I'm going to kill all of you. The bomb is set. Everything is ready. All I have to do is press the button. This one's for Phil. And for my face.

(Presses button)

(Long Pause)

It didn't work. Why didn't it work? Oh my god. The germs found out about it, and dismantled my bomb. That means they know I'm here. They know about me. Oh my god! They know I'm here. They could be here any moment. Fighting to get in. Fighting to get in. They could be here, the germs, ready to attack. Oh my god.

(Knocking on the door)

There's a knocking on the door. They got people knocking on the door. Oh my god.

What are they doing? They're everywhere. They're going to get me. Phil. Phil save me. Phil. Phil, save me. No! We're gonna get out of this.

Stupid germs. You'll never take me alive germs. I'm gonna fight. I'm gonna fight until the end. I'm gonna take as many of you with me as I can germs. As many of you as I can. So let's do this.

Shortly after this I wrote a paragraph describing this project another way, and I believe this helped to further contextualize and describe what I was trying to accomplish with this show. The paragraph is below.

This show is called the Germophobe; it's about a man whose irrational fear of germs has ballooned out into an irrational fear of the outside world. Fear of being infected, and affected by foreign things and ideas, and this fear drives him to maintain strict control over his imagined world populated by household items. He resorts to torture in order to extract information from unruly subjects, but this time he makes a mistake (in torturing a tin can), and tortures the wrong subject to death. This begins a rift, between him and his trusted advisor (a bottle of hand sanitizer called Phil) that threatens to destroy his entire fantasy world.

CHAPTER 5: A GROWING TEXT

A lot of the early process was to add to the text what I wanted and delete from it what didn't serve my purpose. One of the earliest additions was an exchange between Phil (the bottle of hand sanitizer) and the main character right after he has tortured one of two "people" (inanimate objects). In the course of this exchange the main character realizes he accidentally tortured the wrong individual and then tries to justify the mistake. The earliest version of this is below.

These people Phil, I tell ya, living in a fantasy world. They think they can lie to me. They think they can lie to themselves. They think if they believe it so strongly they'll be safe, but a traitor is always a traitor. It doesn't matter. I see it. I know they're lying. They can lie to themselves, but they're only hurting themselves. They can't lie to me, and they can't lie to him, to Jesus (He-Zeus), our heavenly father who sits on high, and rules from above. He sees what they really are, and he punishes them accordingly, because although he is fair, he is just, and that is what I am doing. I am being his justice, to serve and protect this world we live in. With thunderbolt in hand he rains shock and awe from above, it's a stinger, destroying all those who would threaten us: Germs. We can't be lazy about this, we have to be preemptive, and strike like a predator; ever vigilant like a killer bee drone. Not just destroying individual germs, but their spouses, their children and entire families of germs; actively seeking out and sterilizing infestations before they become serious complications. Would you expect any less from the king of the Gods? No you wouldn't, and we don't expect any less of ourselves. So what's next? What? What?!

I interrogated the wrong guy? They were here for a traffic violation?

Oh. Well mistakes happen, no body's perfect, but this is a blessing in disguise. You see, when we release him, not now he's probably raving mad, he won't just disappear, he'll spread the word of the work that we do here, and all will learn the price of treason.

It doesn't matter that he wasn't, what matters is that he could have been, like anyone could have been. No one is safe, anyone can be affected, can be infected, so with this knowledge they'll police themselves. They'll watch and look for the signs of infection, and report it because although they don't know if we're watching them specifically, they know that we're watching, and the chance that it could be them we're watching is more than enough to make them watch themselves, and that is how we will win. The germs will make no in-roads on us.

I then decided to expand upon this section. I reworked and rewrote the text after "What? What?!" into the following.

What? What?!

I interrogated the wrong guy? That's impossible I'm always thorough.

What do you mean he's a tin can? Oh my god he's a tin can. I was supposed to interrogate the tin can! Of course, he was the insubordinate officer suspected of collusion with the germs. The military brass isn't going to be happy about this. I need to placate them so they don't mutiny. Don't worry about the Windex. All the cleaning products are all so squeaky clean. They're always the most loyal of subjects.

Oh. Well mistakes happen, no body's perfect, but this is a blessing in disguise. You see, when we release him, not now he's probably raving mad, he won't just disappear, he'll spread the word of the work that we do here, and all will learn the price of treason. I'm talking about the bottle of Windex. There's nothing we can do for the Tin can. Throw him out, tell the brass of his germ involvement. We'll create some falsified documents, it'll be easy.

So we didn't get any info from him, so what? The point of using the tin can is not to get info. If I wanted his cooperation I would have offered him a Mansion on Nantucket Island, and a retirement pension, but I didn't.

Of course we didn't find out if he was with the germs or not. It doesn't matter. What matters, is that he could have been, like anyone could have been. No one is safe, anyone can be affected, can be infected, so with this knowledge they'll police themselves. They'll watch and look for the signs of infection, and report it because although they don't know if we're watching them specifically, they know that we're watching, and the chance that it could be them we're watching is more than enough to make them watch themselves, and that is how we will win. The germs will make no in-roads on us. If you have cancer, terminal malignant cancer, what do you do? Of course you go to your oncologist, and what does he do? Yes he treats you, how does he do that?

With any means necessary.; Aggressive Chemo therapy, radiation treatments, extremely invasive operations. You cut out healthy lymph nodes just to keep it from spreading. All of this is in the hope of eradicating every last one of the insurgent cells, because all it takes is one. One loose cannon can destroy all that hard work, and then you have to start all over again, and I refuse to do that! We will not go back, we will go forward. We must be aggressive, and vigilant . Our survival depends on it.

Proverbs 20 verse 26, "A wise king sifts out the wicked and brings the threshing wheel over them." This is what I have to do to keep us all safe. I would rather accept a few casualties through accident, than lose everything through carelessness. We are fighting against germs that would contaminate and impurify our precious bodily fluids, tissues, and organs.

That reminds me-Phil what the hell is that!(points behind Phil, while Phil's looking, he quickly gets a squirt of hand sanitizer from Phil)

What? What'd I do. Now Phil I don't think you're being fair here. I asked, I asked nicely, and you refused. I pleaded with you, and now its come to this.

Phil, often I think of you as a very wise Buddha, but you have to keep that temper in check. It's gonna be the death of you. Which reminds me, I have to go talk to the troops. Duty calls. Phil I know you want to talk to me, but not right now. I have a job to do. I have to talk to the brass. We'll talk later. Later. I'm going.

This growth indicated that the story was beginning to take shape, but what happened next is what defined the unique identity of this show more than anything.

CHAPTER 6: CONVERSION INTO VERSE

After the above addition I decided I wanted a section where the character spoke to a collection of imagined soldiers to give a rallying speech. I wanted it to be parodistic in nature, so I decided to use Mark Antony's speech "Friends, romans, countrymen lend me your ears" as a starting point. The first version of this speech is here.

Soldiers, contractors, my fellow humans:
we are here at an important juncture
in our history; a time of great risk,
but also of great possibilities.
Almost a decade has passed since we lost
great men in the terrible infection.
Time since has been hard and many more lost,
due to the indecision of a few,
hope, will, and the moral integrity
needed to make quick decisions of state.
Now and forever that time is over.
They will say of us, "We brake for no one"
For why should we waste indecisive thought
When human beings will either live or rot?

These years have not been easy for any
And harder still it's become recently;
We have gone without refrigeration,
And because of this many have perished.
Bananas went first, unavoidable,
But then so did veggies and other fruits
Until we lost all, even beets and roots.
Then breads and meats, and without induced cold
Everything was lost to the germs, the mold.
That is except for you, the canned goods.
A fact that's been rather hard for many
And I know you've felt it. I myself have
Lamented the gross shortness of dairy,
A point of contention for many here,
But nary fear, when more is milked
You will drink first and not be bilked.

Using a lot of Iambic Pentameter, and rhyming couplets I sought experimentally to use verse in this instant to further the story. After showing this to my advisor on the project, professor George Judy, he rhetorically asked, "Why not have the rest of this in verse?" After a second I realized that there was absolutely no reason not to have this show in verse. Since it was taking place in a individual's fantasy world the addition of verse may be a helpful element in establishing that fantasy world. I immediately began the task of converting my text mostly into iambic pentameter with plenty of rhyming couplets. It was by no means easy, and I found myself trying to find fresh words to create rhymes. To illustrate how different the text became, below are a few examples of text before and after its verse conversion. The first example is one used previously in the last chapter.

These people Phil, I tell ya, living in a fantasy world. They think they can lie to me. They think they can lie to themselves. They think if they believe it so strongly they'll be safe, but a traitor is always a traitor. It doesn't matter. I see it. I know they're lying. They can lie to themselves, but they're only hurting themselves. They can't lie to me, and they can't lie to him, to Jesus(He-Zeus), our heavenly father who sits on high, and rules from above. He sees what they really are, and he punishes them accordingly, because although he is fair, he is just, and that is what I am doing. I am being his justice, to serve and protect this world we live in. With thunderbolt in hand he rains shock and awe from above, it's a stinger, destroying all those who would threaten us: Germs. We can't be lazy about this, we have to be preemptive, and strike like a predator; ever vigilant like a killer bee drone. Not just destroying individual germs, but their spouses, their children and entire families of germs; actively seeking out and sterilizing infestations before they become serious complications. Would you expect any less from the king of the Gods? No you wouldn't, and we don't expect any less of ourselves. So what's next?

This text was transformed into:

These people, Phil, live in a fantasy
They think they can lie to themselves and me.
It doesn't matter, I know, its no use;
To he who sits on high above Jesus
You cannot lie. He can tell, he can see,
And he can punish them accordingly
Because although he is fair, he is just,
And that is what I am doing. I must
Be justice and serve and protect this world
In godly fashion with my flag unfurled
And thunderbolt raining shock and awe
From above encumbered with no law
Destroying all those who would threaten us
Quickly, cleanly, and without any fuss.
In predatory fashion preemptive
Like drone killer bee strikes for protective

Sterilization of infestations
Before they're serious complications.
We should consider ourselves very blessed
From king of the gods you'd expect no less.
Spouses and children of germs, next, next, next!

I found that the exercise of converting the prose to verse forced me to condense what I wrote. The end products of this conversion ended up with fewer words, but with more meaning per sentence. Here is another example.

If you have cancer, terminal malignant cancer, what do you do?
Of course you go to your oncologist, and what does he do?
Yes he treats you, how does he do that?
With any means necessary.; Aggressive Chemo therapy, radiation treatments, extremely invasive operations. You cut out healthy lymph nodes just to keep it from spreading. All of this is in the hope of eradicating every last one of the insurgent cells, because all it takes is one. One loose cannon can destroy all that hard work, and then you have to start all over again, and I refuse to do that! We will not go back, we will go forward. We must be aggressive, and vigilant . Our survival depends on it.

Here is its conversion:

How do you treat a growth that's cancerous?
In one word saying all: aggressively.
Radiation treatments, chemotherapy,
Extremely invasive operations
With the top goal of eradication
Of every last one of the insurgent cells.
Cutting out healthy lymph nodes simply tells
Of the urgency: it only takes one.
A loose cannon means all your work is done.
You start all over again. I refuse
To go back, survival means rigid use.

This conversion of the play into verse marked a shift for me towards a more conscious use of language. Taking what I wanted to say, and putting specific limits on how I could say it gave me a creative challenge through which I forged the eventual performance text. I believe the show was made much better for it.

CHAPTER 7: THE TRIPTOCLES EXAMPLE

Some parts of the text went through multiple permutations like this one below. The story of Triptocles in the work is a special example. Its genesis and growth deserve some explanation, so this section is devoted specifically to it.

The story started as a Gmail chat conversation I had with my brother. I liked the story of a man losing control, and thought it would be a good addition to my show because the story mirrors that of my protagonist. I translated the story to prose(below) which I then inserted into my improvisation video transcript, converted it into mostly iambic pentameter, and then gave it a more deliberate rhyme structure as well as various additions and subtractions along the way.

once upon a time
there was a man who tripped up the stairs.
Usually people trip down the stairs.
Curious, but in this case Physics was perfectly willing to make an exception.
Wow right?. What did this man do to earn such an honor?
Maybe it was his long sordid history/love affair with Physic's little sister Entropy that made him
the exceptional target for the universal laws of governance I take it then Physics did not
approve of this relationship,
or maybe it was his dabbling in intelligent design perhaps that's why,
but Physic's little sister will run you down, and in those cases you can see why he had to break it
off. The whole thing was just a battle he couldn't win I take it.
that's just it! This exceptional punishment was so elegant.
In falling up the stairs he would just keep going.
Especially when he tripped on an escalator; he almost didn't survive.
So, how did he manage?
You'll have to ask him.
He's very private about the matter, but I would guess that in the aftermath of such a
catastrophe he took things one step at a time,
but what ever you do, do not mention M. C. Escher.
He will get very very angry.
You'll know when you see his paintings. I love those paintings, but not this guy. I believe
Physics hired him to design a prison for our poor hero,
one made with padded steps so he can fall forever at a geometrically increasing speed, and not
get injured. Oh, the agony never ends.
That'll teach him to mess with Entropy.

Almost like Sisyphus...except Sisyphus is having the time of his life:
he whistles the whole time he's pushing that rock up that hill, and rides the rock all the way
down each time; more like the rock rides him, but let's put it this way...Sisyphus still doesn't
know he'll never succeed.
Our Hero, for lack of a better name lets call him Triptocles, is in an ever- increasing state of
nausea.
Sisyphus can take a break. Now are you with me here?

Gotcha. the difference is he has no hope
Our Hero Triptocles can't have hope.

Where as Sisyphus will chat your ear off the whole time, Triptocles hasn't talked to anyone in centuries. The only way you'd get him to get anything anywhere is to shove it in his pocket and push him over a staircase.

Give a man Hope, and he'll be happy forever doing just about anything.

Take away his self-control, and he'll end up a mess, and he won't do anything even if you ask pretty please.

But that's all stuff we'll talk about later.

So in summation, don't mess with Physics, or Physics will have fun with you. Lesson learned?

Here is the same section converted to iambic pentameter.

once upon a time there was a man
who tripped up the stairs. Usually People
trip down, but physics took exception here.
No one knows how this man earned this honor;
Perhaps his love affair with Entropy
Is what made him the exceptional target
For the universal laws of governance,
Of this Physics did not approve at all;
Either that or his unswerving beliefs
Regarding our intelligent design
Based on the scientific facts given
In certain religious texts and their proof
By mysteries of faith was just enough
To convince him to play with his rules too,
But Physic's little sister will run you down,
Then you know why he had to break it off:
A battle he couldn't win I take it.

That's it, a punishment so elegant
Falling up the stairs, he'd just keep going,
On an escalator he almost died.
How did he manage in the aftermath
Of such a catastrophe? All he did
Was simply take things one step at a time,
But don't mention M. C. Escher to him;
Trust me you'll know when you see his paintings,
The stairs that lead to stairs that never end.

A prison design physics conscripted

From him with padded steps so he can fall
Forever at a geometric rate
Of increase and not die: pain without end.
That'll teach him to mess with entropy.

Like Sisyphus, but unlike him in joy,
Although he does push a rock up a hill,
And it does fall back down to the bottom
And he does start it all over again
Ad Infinitum, he is ignorant
That he has no hope of any success
And thus is under no real great duress.

Our Hero, lets call him Triptocles
Is irreparably shattered and hopeless,
Our Sisyphus can always take a break.
And that with hope does all the difference make.

Give man hope: he is happy forever
Doing anything that you ask of him.
Take man's hope: from his joy he is severed
Infinitely and won't do a thing.
Without even dim hope he is all null
Try as you may, you can't get in his skull
You ask again and again and again
The answer is always, always, always NO!

So in summation here's my persuasion:
The laws of physics are immutable
And like my rules are indisputable
Do not attempt to bend or break or unscrew
The physical rules I have set for you.
Lesson learned, or shall I get violent too?
Thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you.

After some serious reworking I transformed this section into the text below that begins with two sonnets and then breaks down into a looser rhyming structure.

Upon a time a man named Triptocles
Tripped up stairs at geometric increase.
Physics exempt him from entropy's law
And he ended up bloody and torn raw

From a near fatal escalator trip
That went for hours after loosing grip
And falling up ever faster away
From ground we take for granted every day.
In times to come he stayed away from stairs,
Another accident he couldn't bear
One step at a time he lived through his days
Happy and free from the horrific gaze
Of painful inevitability:
What else had he for possibility?

And then Entropy herself he married
As she aged him for the first time ever
And he saw his youthful life was buried
He sought quickly their marriage to sever
She agreed but said, "like other Rolpens
That leave you'll live in Escher's house of stairs
And once inside the door never opens."
In joy he said, "I'll survive the lair."
He did in agony perpetual
Trip faster up every Mobius rise
And in this purgatory most special
Aged not for being entropy despised.
Physics then spoke to his niece, "entropy
My dear there's plenty more fish in the sea."

Like Sisyphus, but unlike him in joy,
Although he does push a rock up a hill,
And it does fall back down to the bottom
And he does start it all over again
Ad Infinitum, he is ignorant
That he has no hope of any success
And thus is under no real great duress.

Our Sisyphus can always take a break.
And that with hope does all the difference make.

Give man hope: he is happy forever
Doing anything that you ask of him.
Take man's hope: from him his joy is severed
Infinitely and won't do a thing.
Without even dim hope he is all null
Try as you may, you can't get in his skull
You ask again and again and again

The answer is always, always, always NO!

So in summation here's my persuasion:

The laws of physics are immutable

And like my rules are indisputable

Do not attempt to bend or break or unscrew

The physical rules I have set for you.

Lesson learned, or shall I get violent too?

Thank you. Thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you.

Not only did this section of text change, but also its orientation within the show as well. In my earlier drafts I put it near the beginning right before the torture scene. In this situation the protagonist is telling the story because Phil (His bottle of hand sanitizer) wants him to tell him a story. I decided to move this section of text because Professor George Judy pointed out to me that having it at the beginning undercuts the forward momentum the show needs to be building at this point. At first I decided to have the protagonist speak it while beating up and eventually killing Phil. This was a great idea, but the text being as long as it was, I could not justify a "beat down" that lasted that long, and the lines aren't being said to try to change anything in the scene. I knew I wanted to keep the text, and put it after the initial torture so it functions more like a story of justification. With some suggestions from Professor Judy, I eventually settled on putting it right before the killing of Phil. In this way the section is part of a build up that leads to Phil's death. The telling of this story acts as a last ditch effort before Phil MUST die.

This is one of the large changes with which Professor Judy was very helpful. In the next Chapter I'll go over some smaller changes I decided to enact at his suggestion.

CHAPTER 8: RECOMMENDATIONS FROM PROFESSOR GEORGE JUDY

After finishing a complete draft in verse I sent a copy to Professor Judy, and having looked at it he recommended a few smaller changes for rhyme and clarity. Some of which I decided to implement. A few of those are here below.

And who is to blame, who gave me this thrill?
I asked you nicely, now answer me Phil!

I preferred Judy's suggestion. It was more alliterative. Here it is.

And who is to blame, who gave me this **chill**?
I screamed for support! now answer me Phil!

Most of the changes were of this magnitude, a couple of words here and there, but a few of them were three or more lines recommended for clarity. I also took a few of these suggestions. Below are a few other changes that I incorporated. This first one was a suggestion to add three more lines for clarity.

Phil where are you? Phil! Ah, there you are.
Security was breached; the door was ajar!
Beans and Cleaner lost it and went over the wall,
I brought them back; but you didn't answer my call.

I decided to keep it mostly, but with a slight change.

Phil where are you? Phil! Ah, there you are.
Security was breached; the door was ajar!
Beans and Cleaner went over the wall,
I brought them back; you didn't answer my call.

The next example is one in which Professor Judy recommended a reorganizing and editing of this text.

We are never leaving, we're staying right here,
where it's safe, and warm, we have enough food,
we have clean air, and we have the freedom
that we need to live the life that we can.
That's what's at stake Phil, so don't ask me again.

He recommended the following.

We are never leaving, we're staying right here,
where it's safe, and warm, for those we hold dear

**we have enough food, we have clean air,
and we have the freedom to live, with care...
That's what's at stake Phil, so let's leave it there.**

I decided to retain some of his suggestions here.

We are never leaving, we're staying right here,
where it's safe, and warm, for those we hold dear
we have enough food, we have clean air,
and we have the freedom to live the life that we can.
That's what's at stake Phil, so don't ask me again!

These were small changes, but I believe they helped me to further the creation of the play, and the unfolding of the story. The suggestions from Professor Judy made me rethink my text, and clarify for myself what it is I'm trying to communicate. This is just a small example of where his guidance has been helpful.

CHAPTER 9: THE FINAL SCRIPT

Below is the final script I used for the performance of my one-man show and incorporated changes for the performance on Sunday, January 16th, 2011. Stage directions are in parenthesis. It consists of one character talking and interacting with inanimate objects as if they were answering back to him like living sentient beings. The stage is covered in a twenty square foot section of plastic wrap that is anchored down by a rolling cooler, and four black rehearsal boxes. All five of which are in a five-point star configuration with the rolling cooler at the down stage right corner, and a box on the down stage left corner acting as the bottom two points. Two other boxes are set stage right and left at about middle stage. The Box upstage center is stood upon late in the show. The preset props are as follows: a large half-empty bottle of hand sanitizer (The character of Phil) set behind the upstage center box, a can opener set on the middle stage left box with a purple bathrobe laid out directly stage right of it, and a large block of cheese set in the cooler down stage right. Props backstage that are taken onstage by the actor are a large can of beans, and a clear bottle filled with blue drinkable liquid. The action is one continuous scene. There are two light settings: a basic stage illumination with a yellow tinge that begins the show and remains for most of the piece and addition light on the audience that come up close to the end.

The Germophobe

Or

***The fantastical journey of Edward G. Braithwaight III
As leader of human kind's last hope for victory over
The subversive tactics of botulism
(and their microscopic allies)
to overturn the world order
and deny us all the rights
of Life, liberty and the pursuit of cheese***

A one-man play written and performed by Alexander Galick

(Lights up)

(Enter Germophobe)

Seal the doors! I am so glad that's over.
It was like being under a boulder
My mind was certain I would perish
Forever torn from this world I cherish
And who is to blame, who gave me this chill?
I screamed for support! now answer me Phil!

Phil where are you? Phil! Ah, there you are.
(The bottle of hand sanitizer)
Security was breached; the door was ajar!
Beans and Cleaner went over the wall,
I brought them back; you didn't answer my call.

I sat all alone with no protection
From clear and present deadly infection
From gangs of germs with malicious intent
Who saw my weakness and picked up my scent;
Severely injured with lethal weapons
I could have suffered real complications.
I saw them and then I called out your name
You didn't come. I don't mean to place blame
But if I didn't run when I did call
You probably wouldn't see me at all,
So next time please come as quick as you can
So we can keep clean from that wretched band
How can I win if you're not there man?
Now help me right now to clean up my hands.
I have a query, not to be silly
I want to know why you didn't help me, really.

You want to go out there, out of the room?
We're not going out there. Now I assume
You're joking, although it is in bad taste
Do you not remember why we're incased
in here; the microbes waiting to attack
To lash out, and grapple until you're dead
Never let you come back being inside your head,
and your soul and your face. Here we're safe,
I really don't know how long it'll take
Death to visit every gross germy waif,
So meanwhile we'll stay here for goodness sake!

For they are not like us, they have no spine
No brain, no religion and live in grime
They sit there and wait, and wait until Boom!
And like a clean sweep you're dead as a broom.

Recall what happened when we lived out there?
The Staph attacked and stabbed me in the face.
The burn and scalding felt akin to mace.

On my face of all places, invading
the spaces of my meek cheek;
With their barbed cutlasses
Capturing, consuming and colonizing,
and sockdologizing, and proselytizing
All over the pristine loyal cellular citizens of my flesh,
And being invaded by foreign bodies that want to un-create me,
They broke out in revolt, in revulsion,
And if not for my repulsion they would still cut deep
the flanks of this space and make me burn!!!

Let's move away from this exposition
And embark upon interrogation.

Where is the can of beans? I need the can.
Ah there you are, you look nothing like spam.
And are a beautifully labeled man.

Bottle of window cleaner where are you?
O, hello there. Why do you look so blue?
I promise you there is nothing to rue.
Your reputation alone guarantees admiration
From the bottom of my heart to you.
Your vigilance keeps us clean and pristine
And to you, how could I ever be mean.
Diligently you've worked in the kitchen
your destruction of germs left me smitten.
You've lived for years under the kitchen sink
Could I survive without you do you think?
So I just have one question for you now
Why did you go to the basement and how,
And why were you both away from my sight
in the dark underground far from light?

I'm waiting. Please answer now the question.
Perhaps you don't understand my suggestion
That the place you were in was classified
Answer me now, I will not be denied.

The basement is under both lock and key.
Assisted were you by other party
Or parties wishing for basement access
Upon which your presence hinged their success
And if this is true what did these one's seek

In classified place to grab hold and peak
At the state secrets that keep us all clean
From subversive spies who wish to be dean
Of our lives from the moment we're born?

All nothing, my questions are met with scorn,
because with them you are in collusion
to break our sanitary seclusion
Confess to me right now your treachery.

We are alone here, no one but us three
I am not cruel; I'll prove to you right here
Allies names to me mean what you hold dear
Give truth full reign upon your tongues right now
And in return your freedom is allowed.

Your lack of candidness reeks gross of pride
I can take much, but not those who have lied
And continue to do so securely
While others die impurely.
You both are subversive, insurgent spies
Who sought to soot this house with coward's lies.
This is your last chance! I'm not above force,
When you are not willing I can coerce
With can opener tightly in my grip
Folded secrets that till now fail to slip.
Bottle of window cleaner give truth place...

And once again a slap onto my face.
(He latches can opener onto can of beans)
You carry can of bean's life in your hands
Save him from pain by sating my demands.
(Continues to twist can opener)
I do not enjoy insolence
From disobedient household ingredients.
You show no compassion, no thankfulness
For my beneficence. From wilderness
Have I secured you without precedence
And now you've thanked me with this impudence.
It burns my face that this instant I must
Induce this can to screams of pain and rust
For your shortfall of conscientiousness.
Stop this now I beg you. Why were you there,
You were working for the staph weren't you dear;

Who with the botulism are in league
With dust bunnies who with infinite greed
kill for e-coli and never fatigue
In perverse zeal to bring us to our knees?
Detail in full right now their plans to me.
(He rips off can of bean's lid)
Don't tell me you don't know, I know you know.
(pulls out a spoon and begins to eat can of beans)
To get what I need I'll employ any means
O, this is good; do you want any beans?
The answer is no it would seem.
All that hooting and hollering please cease
You had your chance now let me eat in peace.

Since you won't allow any decency
How can you expect any leniency
(Pours the rest of can of beans on bottle of window cleaner)
Perhaps tomorrow you'll say something new,
With your friend's splegmata all over you.
(Goes to Phil, pumps a lot of hand sanitizer on his hands and rubs it all over)
Quite soon Phil that bottle will crack and squeak,
She'll spill his guts and we'll know who's the leak
To the subversive spies of e-coli
And every one of their dirty allies.

These people, Phil, live in a fantasy
They think they can lie to themselves and me.
It doesn't matter, I know, it's no use;
To he who sits on high above Jesus
You cannot lie. He can tell, he can see,
And he can punish them accordingly
Because although he is fair, he is just,
And that is what I am doing. I must
Be justice and serve and protect this world
In godly fashion with my flag unfurled
And thunderbolt raining shock and awe
From above, encumbered with no law,
Destroying all those who would threaten us
Quickly, cleanly, and without any fuss.
We should consider ourselves very blessed
From king of the gods you'd expect no less.
Spouses and children of germs, will be next!

Wait, what do you mean, what is this you say?

I questioned the wrong one, there's just no way
That is the case for I don't make oversights
But answered I was not, no I am right.
When I say there was no mistake
Say what you must, they have chosen their fate.
From the moment the can...the can
I was supposed to interrogate the can
for suspicion of microbe collusion
but forgot my goal in the confusion.
O, this is bad.

The canned goods aren't going to be happy
If they were to find out they would mutiny.
With window cleaner there's nothing at play,
They're all squeaky clean with nothing to say.
Nobody's perfect, and mistakes happen
When released, the bottle won't just disappear
But will spread the word of the work done here.
No one will believe her, those with reason,
But all will know deep down the price of treason.
Toss out the can, falsify some documents
And against his death there will be no arguments.

Was he with the microbes? Don't know. I surmise,
No one is safe from germy compromise.
Knowing this they'll police one another,
Be they aunt, sister, uncle or brother,
They'll look for the signs and report duly
Every hearsay and conjecture to me
They'll know I'm watching, and will watch one another
With fear at work I won't need to bother
And that is how we will win.

The germs will make no in-roads on us.
(Why?)
How do you treat a growth that's cancerous?
In a word saying all: aggressively.
Radiation treatments, chemo-therapy,
Extremely invasive operations
With the top goal of eradication
Of every last one of the insurgent cells.
Cutting out healthy lymph nodes simply tells
Of the urgency: all it takes is one.
A loose cannon means all your works undone.

Proverbs 20 verse 26,

“A wise king through the wicked will sift
and bring the threshing wheel over them.”

That is what I must do to keep us safe:
Rather some casualties through accident
than to lose everything through half-ass-a-ment.
Germs contaminate and impurify
Precious fluids and organs. That is why!

(Phil pleads with him to go outside)

Phil, I've told you this again and again
Leaving here is not a question of when.
It's controversial? well controversy,
And I don't mean at all to be silly,
For survival is what we're all about
Nothing less than that is what will amount
If we take seriously what is at stake,
So Phil once again, no debate.
To go out is dangerous beyond belief
Don't ask again, and give me some relief.

They invade our bodies, take everything
That we are, that we breath, that we feel;
They end up inside of us and take over,
Just like that and we are in quarantine
This is a battle for survival Phil,
and if you're not with it, you're against it,
so I don't wanna hear anything about this.
We are never leaving, we're staying right here,
where it's safe, and warm for the ones we hold dear
we have enough food, we have clean air,
and we have the freedom that we need to live the life that we can.
That's what's at stake Phil, so don't ask me again.

(leaves Phil and goes to Cooler, makes sure no one is looking,
then pulls out a large block of cheese, kisses it)

You are nothing like the milk before you
Even in cereal she caused me pain
I quit her, there was nothing else to do
I found yogurt and felt no shame.
But in time I grew tired of her charms

To kitchen with stealth I took my lusting
For ice cream. At night I binged in her arms.
It ended vile and felt disgusting.
And then you, you were never dour
We had a threesome in a taco shell
Never thought the sour cream would sour.
I realize now without you life is hell.
And now I want cheese, that's no one but you
And if you'll let me, to you I'll be true.
(Phil interjects)
Why did you do that Phil? I was busy!
What's so important to interrupt me?
I see now I have to tell you a story
No, you'll like it, a story of foregone glory

Upon a time a man named Triptocles
Tripped up stairs at geometric increase.
Physics exempt him from entropy's law
And he ended up bloody and torn raw
From a near fatal escalator trip
That went for hours after losing grip
And falling up ever faster away
From ground we take for granted every day.

In times to come he stayed away from stairs,
Another accident he couldn't bear
One step at a time he lived his days
Happy and free from the horrific gaze
Of painful inevitability:
What else had he for possibility?

And then Entropy herself he married
As she aged him for the first time ever
And he saw his youthful life was buried
He sought quickly their marriage to sever

She agreed but said, "like other Rolpens
That leave you'll live in Escher's house of stairs
And once inside the door never opens."
In joy he said, "I'll survive the lair."

He did in agony perpetual
Trip faster up every Mobius rise
And in this purgatory most special

Aged not for being entropy despised.

Physics then spoke to his niece, "entropy
My dear there's plenty more fish in the sea."

Like Sisyphus, but unlike him in joy,
Although he does push a rock up a hill,
And it does fall back down to the bottom
And he does start it all over again
Ad Infinitum, he is ignorant
That he has no hope of any success
And thus is under no real great duress.

Our Sisyphus can always take a break.
And that with hope does all the difference make.

Give man hope: he is happy forever
Doing anything that you ask of him.
Take man's hope: from him his joy is severed
Infinitely and won't do a thing.
Without even dim hope he is all null
Try as you may, you can't get in his skull
You ask again and again and again
The answer is always, always, always NO!

So in summation here's my persuasion:
The laws of physics are immutable
And like my rules are indisputable
Do not attempt to bend or break or unscrew
The physical rules I have set for you.
Lesson learned, or shall I get violent too?

Again and again you still want to leave.
Can't you for once just grant me a reprieve?
Just so you know the answer's still 'No.'
(Threatens to tell on him)
You'd tell them of this, you'd let them all know
Of me and cheese and the can and cleaner?
If I can do nothing to change your demeanor
Then I concede. To your demands I bow
I'll give my command over to you now.

(holds out his hand to Phil)

Let's go to the troops and make it official

(takes hold of Phil, and dashes him on the floor)

You don't tell me what to do you numb-skull!
Like a brother I trusted you completely
And you thought you could vice me discreetly.
Looks like we were both wrong!
Command belongs only to the strong!

(Beats Phil into a bloody pulp)

I think you might have been right. I should leave,
This place, go outside and prepare to lead
Our citizens in the fight against germs
Beyond our walls and crush them all like the worms
They are that think on nothing but our death.
With the cans we'll deprive them all of breath.

Now Phil, get up, start things anew.
Of course you must know that I forgive you.

I love you dear. Get back in the cooler
This is normal when dating the ruler.
Be safe and relax, and sleep tight tonight,
Sweet dreams my dear, don't let bed-bugs bite.

Your death will not be in vain
I will make sure there is reason for your pain.
(spreads Phil's guts all over his hands, and body)

Together at last Phil we'll be stronger.
I can't take this pain any longer.

(Germophobe goes to another section of stage with empty tin cans standing at attention, stands on cooler, or box to give a speech.)

Soldiers, contractors, my fellow humans:
we are here at an important juncture
in our history; a time of great risk,
but also of great possibility.
Almost a decade has passed since we lost
great men in the terrible infection.
Time since has been hard and many more lost,

due to the indecision of a few,
hope, will, and the moral integrity
Needed to make quick decisions of state.
Now and forever that time is over.
Here and now we take full rein of our fate.
They will say of us, "We brake for no one"
No longer will the plodding doubts of man
Be above the great needs of the moment;
For why should we waste indecisive thought
When human beings will either live or rot?

One more thing has come to my attention
Rumors I have heard, and sharp stories told
Detailing horrific fantasies of
Abuse of those under our detention.
How can that possibly be? I have said,
And will continue to say 'this is false.'
Day and day, month and month, year and year
You will know the truth by this simple phrase
The facts speak louder than anyone's word.

So let him speak, he who has facts to share.

Without facts the argument collapses,
And the prosecution of proof prolapses.
Then, good friends you have no need to despair,
But as there is no concrete evidence
Of wrongdoing on those under our watch
I cannot say the same of enemies.
If not us, then who do you think it is?
Foreign bodies intent on our delusion
that we are safe from all their collusion.
With malicious goals and sweet seduction
They'll lure you away to cruel abduction.

But it is true that no government can be
Open and free without enough scrutiny
So please be careful, report torture to me.

These years have not been easy for any
And harder still it's become recently;
We have gone without refrigeration,
And because of this many have perished,
That is they have gone past expiration.

Bananas went first, unavoidable,
But then so did veges and other fruits
Until we lost all, even beets and roots.
Before that breads and meats, and without induced cold
Everything was lost to the germs, the mold.
That is except for you, the canned goods.
For a long while the desserts held fast
But in the end they were just desserts
And despite our hopes, they just couldn't last.

A fact that's been rather hard for many
And I know you've felt it. I myself have
Lamented the gross shortness of dairy,
A point of contention for many here,
But nary fear, when more is milked
You will drink first and not be bilked.

But what is the cause, and who is to blame?
The answer is always, always the same.
The germs that rule by edict and decree
Have no respect for basic human life;
They want to destroy our prosperity,
Sickness of body and brain they are rife
With only one eventuality:
Our destruction in totality
Why should I sit here and wait for our end
When I could go out there with troops and send
Every last germy waif to his maker?
It would only serve to make us safer.
Thus declare I on the germs total war
Now arm yourselves full up to the label
In ten minutes flat we'll charge out that door
And put a clean end to this fable.

(House lights up on audience)
(Germophobe sees audience)

They're here.
E-coli, staphylococcus, streptococcus,
fasciitis, fascists,
Communists, capitalists, Necrosis
mononucleosis, monarchist, creationist
Cryptosporidia, Chlamydia
Diarrhea, gonorrhoea,

Theology, optometry
Agronomy, coffee, papacy,
Rhinoplasty, presidency,
Separatists, Baptists, plagiarists,
Giardia, diagenesis, geneticists,
Photosynthesis,
Botulism!

(looks at the can of beans he ate earlier)

I don't know if I have been infected
The chance alone is more than expected
I must not let a sickness in me spread
The loss is ten times worse if I'm not dead.

I know now germs have been here all along.
You'll finish here and know that I was wrong,
But if I am as evil villain hailed
Then truth is I have won and you have failed:
And when you're confused, reckon hard and long
On these last words I say before I'm gone:
Of every act done here by me today
Your kind has done far worse than words can say.

(Drinks bottle of window cleaner and dies)

CHAPTER 10: THE PERFORMANCE

The performance of this show on January 18, 2011 went well, and was very informative for my creative process. I was not altogether prepared for the amount of laughter that my show would provoke. My own surprise and shock followed moments of laughter I had not anticipated. This being the first time an audience had seen this work I did not fully know what to expect.

There were a few prop issues that came up. The first has to do with opening the can of beans on stage. It made a mess. Although I had put plastic down on the floor to make cleanup faster I ended up with a lot of it on myself. I did hear from a few viewers that they enjoyed watching a character that is very preoccupied with cleanliness get literally into a messy situation. I had not planned for that to be so, but now see the merit in that portrayal.

The second prop issue is the bottle of hand sanitizer. When I smashed the top open during the performance I was not aware that I had left part of the top with a sharp edge, and unfortunately I cut my leg very shortly after when I emptied the bottle on myself.

Having video recorded the performance and watched it several times afterwards, I am convinced that I have created a very enjoyable absurd piece of entertainment. After the performance I asked some of my colleagues what they thought of the play. Their answers ranged from "Dr. Seuss-like episode of the twilight zone" to "It's a play about a guy who doesn't like germs." I did not hear much about torture or abuse of power. My fear is that most people were only entertained and learned nothing from this show. With this in mind I am contemplating changes and additions to my script.

CHAPTER 11: FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PLAY

This play needs to expand. Right now as it stands it's a good start, but there are parts of the story that I did not flesh out fully. One of these is the relationship between the Germophobe and the block of cheese. This relationship functions merely as a plot point right now. I would like to make cheese a full-fledged character that the protagonist interacts with, much like Phil. Whereas the character of Phil inhabits a sphere of work, politics, power etc., I want Cheese to inhabit a home sphere. The protagonist's interaction with these two should mirror that. The end of the workday with Phil signals the shift to home. That needs to be more apparent. Somehow the work sphere with the arrival of Phil should invade the home life, and his murder in front of the wife (cheese) and kids (cheese sticks perhaps) should be followed with a justification that mirrors the one spoken to Phil after can of bean's torture. Creating a pattern of violence followed with justification would help create structure where I believe the piece lacks it.

I also believe the story of Triptocles is completely unexpected. In the story it's an instant payoff without a build up. In order to integrate it into the story more fully I think the protagonist needs to allude to it a couple of times. The Triptocles story is such a concise allegory for the protagonist that I think it needs to be his mantra, and that of his dictatorship. The character sees it as a cautionary tale against disobeying his orders, and should allude to it whenever he is not followed without questions. The line "Remember the story of Triptocles" should function like a violent ultimatum. He should say it to the can of beans and the bottle of window cleaner when they don't tell him what he wants, and he should tell it to Phil when he gives up trying to convince him of the merit of Can of bean's death. When he finally does tell the story it needs to be because Phil has stepped over the line, and this story is the last ditch effort to bring him back before he must kill him.

The last big development I plan on making is clarifying what has changed after Phil's death that convinces the Germophobe to declare war on the germs. Right now it is not clear. I think some absurd justification within the world of this play will work, but I'll have to figure that out.

CHAPTER 12: CONCLUSION

Creating this one-man show has been a unique experience of continuous reinvention; of taking an idea and reshaping it. I realize now how much of playwriting is rewriting. There is of course the initial draft, but after that it's a process of addition, subtraction, and reevaluation.

I am surprised at what eventually materialized from my work. If someone told me at the beginning of this process that at the end I would have a play mostly in verse I would not believe it. With this project I challenged myself, and with its completion I proved to myself I can write and tell a story in verse.

I have also become aware of a shortcoming of mine. Although I appear to be able to write plot points, my ability to justifying those plot points is somewhat lacking. I need to remember that an event that makes sense in my mind may not always makes sense to an audience unless they are given enough information to process the importance of that event within the context of the play.

All in all I have enjoyed this process, and will likely continue writing in the future.

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APPENDIX

VIDEO RECORDING HYPERLINKS

The following are titles and links to YouTube video posts of related material. The first three are the improvisation video recordings that began the writing process, and the last two are recordings of the actual performance.

"The Germophobe" improv videos part 1 August 28, 2010

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yolhw3jr9FE>

"The Germophobe" improv videos part 2 August 28, 2010

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SZ96pyzAKXM>

"The Germophobe" improv videos part 3 October 24, 2010

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wTlf6Da4dAk>

"The Germophobe" 1st performance part 1 January 18, 2011

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qklYZefugPg>

"The Germophobe" 1st performance part 2 January 18, 2011

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HtRnLesso_Y

VITA

Alexander Galick was born in Indiana and raised in the Saint Paul suburb of Oakdale, Minnesota. His acting interest began at the age of 17 at Tartan Senior High School where he performed in a handful of plays. After graduating from high school in 2004 he matriculated to Macalester College to continue his studies and acting. During his time as a student he took the opportunity to act in a premiere production at Theater Mu, and participate in summer actor training with the British American Drama Academy. Both of which piqued his interest in further training: he began to consider a master's degree in acting. In 2008 he earned his Bachelor of Arts Degree in Theatre and German Studies, and matriculated to Louisiana State University's Master of Fine arts program in acting.

In his time there he has grown as an artist by deepening his understanding of the role of an actor through classwork, performance, and teaching. He has worked in a sound studio recording and editing sound. In the summer of 2009, he performed as an acting intern for the Illinois Shakespeare Festival where he performed in two plays understudied for another, and performed in their children's show, and green show. He's traveled to South Korea with a university production of Antigone. At Louisiana State University he has also designed sets for three shows and wrote and performed his one-man show, *The Germophobe*. His training in Louisiana has prepared him for another amazing adventure, and he's perfectly fine with that.