Peter Brook, *Mahabharata* (1987)
scene from tape 3: the killing of Bhisma
warrior-priest on side of Kauravas
Amba’s suicide & reincarnation as Shikandin
frame-tale of Vyasa & Dhritarashtra

Translating from Stage to Screen
filming of Madonna in concert
Edward Said, *Orientalism*; cultural legacy of imperialism
mysterious, exotic, sinister, silent, feminine
representations of Other as representations of Self
how read casting of Vyasa in Brook’s *Mahabharata*?

Gautam Dasgupta, “The Mahabharata: Peter Brook’s ‘Orientalism,’”

“On the political level, it cannot be denied that such [Orientalist] thinking
continues to play a role in international affairs. “Orientalist” prejudices have
not ceased to exist. Generalities about cultures continue to abound, and this is
of course by no means the sole prerogative of the Occidental mind. But the
question that concerns me is why so many artists in the West, particularly in
the past few decades, have drawn upon Oriental themes and myths to spur
their own creativity? Is it because, in all honesty, they do see the world as an
organic whole, or is there implicit in their cross-fertilizing instincts a
recognition of their own paucity of ideas? And, at worst, does the exoticism
of the Orient, its different values and norms, somehow permit . . .
. . . somehow permit them to evade criticisms of their cultures, supplanting what ought to be a vital discourse on issues generated by their own society by a surrogate other-world picture? There are by no means easy questions to answer, and nor am I suggesting that we do away with all cross-cultural artistic endeavors. What concerns me is that the representation of another culture’s artistic product address the lived, sensate fabric of that borrowed cloth. And more, that such expressions of cultural give and take not descend to banal generalities about the foreign culture, but seek to uncover its specificities, its actual, and not merely perceived, links with its own society . . . The *Mahabharata* is nothing, an empty shell, if it is read merely as a compendium of martial legends . . . And that, precisely, is the reading attributed . . . by Carrière and Brook” (10-11).
Bhavas (states), masks, class-status
Gesture & universalism
King Erlangga (ca. 1019-1049) AD
consolidates power in Java; has Hindu epics translated
Bali, small island in Indonesia
religion: syncretism of Hinduism & local animism
extremely diverse traditions of performance & other arts
*wayang kulit (wayang parwa)*: puppet + leather, skin
*dalang*, master puppeteer
lay priest, intellectual, cultural commentator, artist
sings, must know music, languages
Javanese Kawi + High, Middle, Low Balinese
*gamelan* orchestra
perform at night by oil lamp, often for a ritual celebration
performances begin with dance of “tree of life” (*kayon*)
so-called “ritual drama” not a static artifact
Twalen & Wredah’s contemporary translations
Stanislavski on physical actions
  major terms: acting for a purpose/intention; magic if; given circumstances

Artaud sees Balinese in August, 1931
  Colonial Exhibition at Vincennes Forest, south-east of Paris forest, home to Théâtre du Soleil
  near beginning of his thinking about “Theatre of Cruelty”
  misreads Balinese dance gestures of keras (strong) and manis (soft) tensions for something like mudras
  powerful misreadings

Grotowski
  takes up technique of physical actions
  transforms with spiritual & extra-linguistic aspirations