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The Invisible Protagonist: A Reassessment of Brecht's The Good Person of Szechwan

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Oral Presentation O6.2

**THE INVISIBLE PROTAGONIST: A REASSESSMENT OF BRECHT'S
*THE GOOD PERSON OF SZECHWAN***

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Often, we as readers are presented with a cast of characters, each of which is assigned a role in the text: protagonist, antagonist, mentor, tempter, etc. In many instances, these assigned roles are explicit; but occasionally, the lines between these roles become blurred. Such an occasion arises with Bertolt Brecht's play *The Good Person of Szechwan* (1943), where scholarship takes for granted that the character to whom the title refers is a prostitute turned businesswoman named Shen Te. I make the claim in my paper that the person to whom the title refers is not Shen Te, but instead Wang the waterseller. Though often relegated in scholarship to the status of supporting character, I argue that it is Wang rather than Shen Te that is the driver of the central ethical question of the play. I apply Brecht's own theater theory to a close reading of the play in order to illuminate Wang's standing as one of the play's most important figures and give him credit as the indispensable character that he is.