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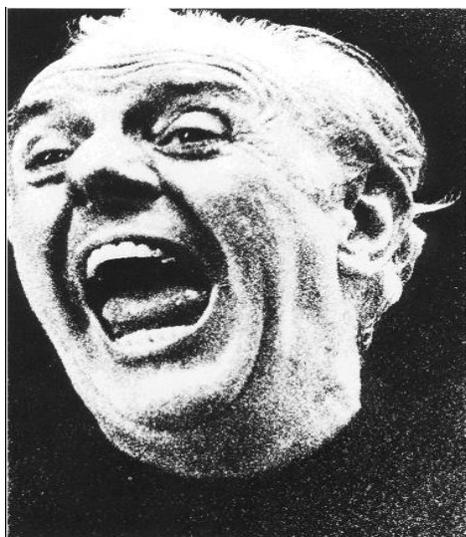
**Title of the Paper: Contemporary Literature**

**Unit: Dario Fo's *Accidental Death of An Anarchist***

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**1 Dario Fo's Life and Works** 1. **Dario Fo** - Jenkins, Ron. "Dario Fo: The Roar of the Clown." *The Drama Review* 30.1 (1986): 171-179. *JSTOR*. 29 Sept. 2008 <<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1145719>>.

Dario Fo was born in 1926 in Northern Italy. He grew up in a village community which had a



strong tradition of popular lore. Fo, as a boy, was much influenced by his maternal grandfather, Bristin who was locally famous for his ability as a teller of tales and for his biting sarcasm. During his initial years Fo was much interested in painting and also put on his first art exhibition in Bergamo in 1945. He also enrolled at an art-school to study architecture in Milan though gradually the pull of theatre became irresistible for him. In 1941-45 he turned to stage design and theatre and began to improvise monologues. During this period Fo socialized with people who saw theatre as indispensable

**Revue – A form of theatrical entertainment based on jokes, songs, dances and satirical comments based on contemporary issues. It originated in the early 19<sup>th</sup> C and reached its peak in the 1920s-30s particularly in the US and England.**

to the construction of the new order and to the well being of the body politic. Fo greatly admired Giorgio Strehler who, with Paolo Grassi, established Italy's first fixed theatre – The Piccolo Teatro. Strehler introduced him to the craft and profession of theatre making, but Fo did not wish to follow Strehler's style that was limited to radical reinterpretations of the classics. Fo was a storyteller in the popular tradition and so sought a person like Franco Parenti who was a famous

stage actor and radio performer in the 1950s. Parenti took him on tour to theatres and halls around Milan and also arranged for a radio audition for him where Fo succeeded in getting a commission for a series of humorous monologues, to be broadcast over the 1950-1 season.<sup>1</sup> The success of these radio and theatre performances led to an invitation for Fo to appear in cabaret and revues that were a spectacular escapist entertainment of post-war Italy. In revue, Fo built his reputation as an extraordinary comic and mime artist. During this period Fo was much influenced by Gramscian theory of culture along with Brecht's theory of theatre (both elaborated below). In the immediate post-war years, Italian theatre underwent an absolute revolution with the rise of a new phenomena of small theatres that play an important role in shaping the idea of a "popular stage".

In 1951, Fo met Franca Rame, who belonged to the family of touring actors in northern Italy and who performed a style of improvised drama, which had its roots in the 'commedia dell'arte.' Originally the family was puppeteers but with the invention of cinema, they incorporated acting and turned to People's Theatre. The Rame family's theatre was a theatre of improvisation, which did not mean free invention progressively but articulations of a range of



## 2. **Franca Rame** - [donneinazione.wordpress.com/.../franca-rame/](https://donneinazione.wordpress.com/.../franca-rame/)

memorized dialogues and exchanges relating to situations. They also incorporated local legends and miracles associated with the local saint in their performances. Franca was born on 18 July 1929, in Parabiago, in the province of Milan, where the family happened to be performing at that time. As a young actor, Franca played miniscule roles in various shows where she also worked with Dario Fo. After dating for a few years they got married in 1954. In 1955, after the birth of their son, Dario and Franca moved to Rome to work in cinema. Fo was constantly told by film directors that his theatre expertise was of no value in the cinema. Fo and Franca worked as lead actors in a film which was also scripted by Fo but it failed miserably. In 1959, Fo and

Rame returned to Milan, after an unsuccessful stint in films, and founded the Dario Fo-Franca

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<sup>1</sup> The monologues were collected under the title *Poer nano*, and were staged at the Odeon in Milan in 1953 as part of a variety show.

Rame Theatre Company. While Rame handled the administrative tasks, Fo wrote scripts, acted, directed, and designed costumes and stage paraphernalia. During this period, Fo and Rame performed a series of farces based on scripts from the Rame family archive. By now Fo was a well-established figure in theatre and had adopted the leftist positions held by many writers and artists. Then came in Fo's 'bourgeois period'<sup>2</sup> in which he aimed to unsettle and irritate the bourgeois audience through his satires. Fo wrote and performed plays like *Archangels Don't Play Pinball* (1959), *He Had Two Pistols and White and Black Eyes* (1960) and *Isabella, Three Caravels and a Con-Man* (1963) in this period. Both Fo and Rame were close to the Communist Party and in a period of the widespread industrial unrest that culminated in the general strike of 1960, Fo's subversive theatre won him a huge popular audience. In 1962, the socialists came to power and initiated various new commissions in one of which Dario Fo and Franca Rame were invited by RAI (Radio Italy International) to host *Canzonissima*, a popular prime time variety show. Fo raised the show above mindless giggles, chatter and sing-song and took a satirical look at contemporary Italy. In the show Fo ridiculed the mob, attacked the Mafia and exposed the building contractors through satire and sketches. As a result their contract with the channel was terminated but they were already 'celebrities' now. All this while, Fo's reputation grew and his shows ran in various European cities. In 1966, the Fo-Rame company toured sixteen countries. In 1967, Fo came up with *Toss the Lady Out* which is seen as the last work of Fo's 'bourgeois period'.

In 1968, Fo and Rame broke with the commercial theatre and founded Nuova Scena theatre collective with mobile stages. The company toured Milan and used an abandoned factory for performance. The choice of touring theatre was a return to the roots of Italian theatre, the theatre from which Franca Rame had emerged. During the 1968-9 season, Fo's troupe performed new pieces like *Grand Pantomime with Puppets Large and Medium* which offers commentary on fascism. In 1969 Fo presented *Mistero Buffo*, a play of monologues that blended of medieval drama and topical issues. Its 5000 performances – some even in sports arenas – attest to its immense popularity. In 1970, after the split of Nuova Scena they began another theatre group, La Commune which attacked established parties of both left and right. It produced plays based on

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<sup>2</sup> Joseph Farrell uses the phrase in his book *Dario Fo and Franca Rame: Harlequins of the Revolution* (London: Methuen, 2001) to characterize Fo's works produced from 1959 to 1968. The plays were bourgeois in the sense that they were played in commercial or 'bourgeois' venues.

theatrical improvisation like *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* (1970), in which Fo was highly critical of abuse of structures of law and order. While on tours, the group received bomb threats and was refused permission various times to perform in towns with a Communist town council. Fo and Franca's phones were being tapped and they were followed by policemen. In 1973, Franca Rame was kidnapped, tortured and raped by a fascist group in Milan. Franca wrote about her experience two years later in the form of a one-woman play, entitled *The Rape*. After the break with commercial theatre in 1968 and with Nuova Scena and the PCI in 1970, Dario Fo and Franca Rame resigned from La Commune due to 'acts of uncomradely dishonesty'<sup>3</sup> committed by certain members of the cooperative. Later, in 1974, Fo came up with *Can't Pay? Won't Pay!*, a farce that dealt with the question of civil disobedience. In 1975, Fo was nominated for the Nobel Prize for Literature but the award went to Saul Bellow. In the next play *The Kidnapping of Fanfani* (1975) Fo showed the fantasy kidnapping of a politician, it was intended as a contribution to the election campaign. Then came a phase in which Fo collaborated with Franca in producing television programme like *Let's Talk About Women* and plays like *Waking Up* and *A Woman Alone* which raised issues related to women. The great political surge in Italy ended by the 80s and Fo turned to directing and writing plays that emphasize more on the stage technique than on the content which is no longer politically volatile. In 1997, an Italian television company started a reality show series, that required a celebrity couple who had never met before and who was put in a car with three cameras enroute to Rome from Milan. Dario Fo and Ambra Angiolini, a teenage singer and television personality, were chosen to inaugurate the show. On October 11, 1997 the Nobel Prize for Literature was announced and Fo won it while still in the car for the show. The Swedish Academy's formal citation declared that:

Fo emulates the jesters of the Middle Ages in scourging authority and upholding the dignity of the downtrodden. For many years, Fo has been performed all over the world, perhaps more than any other contemporary dramatist...he if anyone merits the description of jester in the true meaning of the word. With a blend of laughter and gravity he opens our eyes to abuses and injustices in society, and also to the wider historical perspective in which they can be placed. Fo is an extremely serious satirist with a multifaceted oeuvre. His independence and clear-sightedness have led him to take great

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<sup>3</sup> Farrell, *Dario Fo and Franca Rame: Harlequins of the Revolution* 124.

risks, whose consequences he has been made to feel while at the same time experiencing enormous reponse from widely differing quarters...As in 'commedia dell'arte', they are always open for additions and dislocations, continually encouraging the actors to improvise, which that the audience is activated in a remarkable way. His is an oeuvre of impressive artistic vitality and range.<sup>4</sup>

The announcement gave rise to serious debate about theatre and literature, and whether Fo's kind of theatre and playwriting should be eligible for the world's greatest literary award. Giulio Ferroni, author of a much-admired history of Italian literature, said 'I have a high regard for Fo the actor, but where is the literature.'<sup>5</sup> For decades there have been political and personal judgements on the literary value of Fo's performative oeuvre. Literary scholars like Dacia Maraini, Vincenzo Consolo, as well as Umberto Eco pronounced that Fo deserved the prize for literary achievements and were thrilled that the academy gave the prize to an author who does not belong to the conventional literary world. Fo's performances following the award are an attempt to identify himself as an actor, and he even goes on to say:

I am pleased about this prize because it represents the vindication of actor, because it goes to an actor and not only to a writer, to the jestor and not to the man of letters. It will be first time an actor has shaken a king's hand.'<sup>6</sup>

Dario Fo always spoke of himself as the actor-author who saw the word on stage as of supreme value. For him drama is always about writing with a view to performance. He saw the prize as giving an overdue dignity to the totality of script plus action and 'page plus stage.'<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Farrell, *Dario Fo and Franca Rame: Harlequins of the Revolution* 270.

<sup>5</sup> Farrell 271.

<sup>6</sup> Farrell 274.

<sup>7</sup> Farrell 275.

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Popular Traditions

Dario Fo, one of the most versatile theatre celebrities of contemporary Italy, practices an activist theatre that communicates directly with its audience and is based on forms and principles of popular culture and oral traditions. As Fo says about his first production, *A Poke in the Eye*:

...was based on a history whose origins go back to the goliardic tradition, but mixed with elements from ‘commedia dell’arte’ and modified by my experience with the theatre of Strehler, who, at that time, was truly revolutionary.<sup>8</sup>

**Giullare – He was the strolling player of the Middle Ages, the all-round entertainer who moved from piazza to piazza to give voice to the discontents of the ordinary people. The figure has much in common with the minstrel, or the Shakespearean fool.**

This way Fo experiments with a dialectic between past and the present in order to locate metaphors for contemporary situations and also to reclaim cultural spaces. Fo was most fascinated by the local fishermen or the glassworkers, of his native place, who recounted their narratives while repairing their nets and blowing their glasses. The popular elements in the ‘fabulatore’s’ (story-teller) visual narration and the ‘giullari’ tradition influenced and inspired Fo’s theatrical mode and stagecraft later. ‘Giullare’ (feudal jesters), were

the traveling player roamed the region during tenth and twelfth century and performed to the townspeople or peasants in public plazas. This was a familiar art form throughout Europe since similar figures can be identified such as the French ‘jongleur’ or Spanish ‘juglare’. They were

professional entertainers who would sing songs, dance and perform magic; such



[3 The Guillare - pollodellavaldichiana.splinder.com/post/15080868](http://pollodellavaldichiana.splinder.com/post/15080868)

performance versatility was an important quality of their profession. But Fo’s definition of a ‘giullare’ limits their function only as the carrier of a subversive culture who was particularly popular among the peasantry and the downtrodden. Fo defines one of their chief functions as being ‘the people’s spoken newspaper’<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Farrell, *Dario Fo and Franca Rame: Harlequins of the Revolution* 38.

<sup>9</sup> Tom Behan’s *Dario Fo: The Revolutionary Theatre* (London: Pluto Press, 2000) 96.

as they criticized the feudal landlords and the Church. Fo views the ‘giullare’ as the articulate emissary of a non-articulate culture, voicing profound feelings of unfairness. His own comedy is not one of escapism but is a combination of laughter and anger and *Mistero Buffo* is his tribute to the ‘giullare’ tradition. Fo, like a ‘giullare’, exposes the corruption among the dominant state apparatuses and the resultant oppression of the common people. With reference to the ‘giullare’ Fo declared:

For years I have been the jester for the  
bourgeois, hurling invectives in their faces  
which they responded to with ignorant laughter.  
Now I will become the jester for the proletariat.  
They will become the recipients of my  
invective.<sup>10</sup>

Through his drama, Fo acts as a savage political critic of consumerist society. In 1968, Fo and several other left-wing theatre groups formed ARCI (the Italian Recreational and Cultural Association), which is dedicated to the proletarian revolution. In a collaborative document, with ARCI, Fo expressed dissatisfaction with the contemporary theatre and said:

Today, the theatre caters to the needs of a political and economic elite, making it inaccessible to the people (only 5 percent of the Italian population attends the theatre). This financial discrimination manifests itself in the creation of architectural structures inspired by a feudal system: orchestra and boxes for the masters, the balcony for the servants.<sup>11</sup>

**Realism – A literary movement in the 19<sup>th</sup> century which emphasized the accurate imitation of life as it is, in art. Realistic drama presents an illusion of reality and its characters are usually from the middle class or the working class. Some notable writers in the realistic tradition are Balzac, Flaubert and Zola.**

So ARCI, instead of performing in legitimate theatre arenas, brought theatre to a new audience in alternative venues, performing in factories, stadiums, university dormitories, and gymnasiums. With these radical changes, Fo invented a theatrical process that eliminated many barriers between actors and audience and gave rise to what is known as the ‘third act’ of his drama. This was the discussion integrated into and was as long and turbulent as the

<sup>10</sup> A. Richard Sogliuzzo quotes Fo in his essay “Dario Fo: Puppets for Proletarian Revolution,” *The Drama Review* 16.3 (1972): 74.

<sup>11</sup> Sogliuzzo 74.

performance itself. His drama is a theatrical construction, unlike realistic drama, because it is not based on mundane human reality but on wider concerns of the state. Fo's plays move through a series of farcical situations to expose the exercise of power by the bourgeois state. So laughter and political message are inseparably linked in his drama. The characters become masks and are emblematic ploys illuminating a situation. A 'theatrical text', according to Fo, "is really a musical score, with its rhythms, its silences and its pauses"<sup>12</sup>, one does not get much from reading a score; it needs to be performed and the same is applicable to a play. He brings on to stage puppets, masks and actors with natural or painted faces in collaboration with songs and pantomime. His resultant drama is a communal affair grounded in a precise historical and sociological context.

Fo's drama is highly expressive of gestures, reminiscent of the 'Harlequin's theatre' which later became famous by its eighteenth-century title, the 'commedia dell'arte'.

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<sup>12</sup> David L. Hirst's *Dario Fo and Franca Rame* (London: Macmillan, 1989) 10.



**Masks of Commedia**

4. **The Masks of Commedia** - [natalieharrower.com/.../ccommedia-dell-art/](http://natalieharrower.com/.../ccommedia-dell-art/)

Originating around the sixteenth century, the true ‘commedia dell’arte’ play was not a piece of buffoonery but a tasteful entertainment, “well-balanced and sober, and witty and not full of impertinent trivialities...”<sup>13</sup> It was also called ‘actors theatre’, for the entire theatrical structure rested on their shoulders: the actor-performer was author, producer, storyteller and director. At



the centre of ‘commedia dell’arte’ performances are the four masks: Pantalone, Dottore, Harlequin (also referred to as Arlecchino) and Zanni, out of which the figure of the harlequin is of special interest in Fo’s context. This figure of fantasy was protean and transformative, also the one who had the mixture of rationality, intelligence, ignorance and simplicity. One can see the glimmerings of the figure of Harlequin in Fo’s *Mistero Buffo* and *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*. In *Mistero Buffo*, in particular, Fo uses zoomorphic imagery to drag down

**5. Maurice Sand: Arlecchino - (yr:1858)**  
[www.delpiano.com/carnival/html/harlequin.html](http://www.delpiano.com/carnival/html/harlequin.html)

pompous and authoritative figures of official power.<sup>14</sup> Such symbolism stresses the essential theatricality of the production rather than a dull reproduction of real life, as is the case with realist drama.

‘Commedia dell’arte’ was based on a combination of dialogue and action, serious speeches and clownish tricks not on pantomime alone. Almost all the masks of commedia were grotesque for being bizarre combination of human and animal qualities. They are zoomorphic: Pantalone had traits of a hen, and Harlequin’s of a cat and sometimes a monkey. Fo also derives the technique of improvisation from ‘commedia dell’arte’ where the actors would consign to a range of dialogues and exchanges relating to various situations that might arise in different performances. The improvisation, whereby the actors became themselves, their own authors, was the determinant of the unique quality of the Italian style and differentiated it from other stage

<sup>13</sup> Allardyce Nicoll’s *The World of Harlequin: A Critical Study of the Commedia dell’arte* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1963) 15.

<sup>14</sup> See Farrell’s description of Fo performing ‘The Tale of a Tiger’ in *Harlequins*, 215-16, where he argues that Fo is critical of Italian Communism.

methods. This technique brought novelty to each performance and made the text fluid and ever changing with every successive performance.

Italian theatre is dominated by performance tradition, a significant aspect of popular culture, which partly emerged from resistance to traditional text-based elite theatre. Performance traditions promote cultural uniqueness, tensions and partiality. The Performative lore resists hierarchies of ideas or people and is sympathetic to the marginal, the subversive and the formerly subjugated. Popular forms of performance-centered art and entertainment are full of unlimited possibilities that offer freedom to the performer and a complex variety to the spectator. Fo's theatrical pieces thrive on such endless possibilities that are inspired from popular cultural forms like circus, children's theatre and puppet theatre. Fo is inspired by the circus clown's ancient ability to shock and also by his political-moral commitment. With these interactive realms of performance, Fo challenges the Eurocentric dramatic canon and promotes the multicultural presentation. To communicate his message to an audience comprised mainly of farmers and workers who had never been to the theatre, Fo simplified his narrative and method. He enhanced the plot with colourful costumes, disguises, puppets, clowns, dancers, tightrope artists and carnivalesque elements.<sup>15</sup> Fo's introduction of such performance devises and visual metaphors on stage added possibilities for broad political satire and also helped in the realization of his commitment to a bloodless revolution of the proletariat. Fo's theatrical performances evoke liminal processes that seek transformation both in the centre and the periphery of social arrangements. In this connection Sogliuzzo writes:

Fo's circus was a metaphor of the industrial state, a vast bureaucracy of machines and trapezes in which man had yielded his individuality to the collective pandemonium, a puppet in a tyrannical circus of injustice, prejudice, crime, and war.<sup>16</sup>

Fo's theatrical medium is ultimately his message because utilizing performance traditions born of the popular heritage can best bring about a proletarian revolt. Fo is also drawn by the performative theatre's capacity to blur the distinction between illusion and reality and to negate representation and imitation of mundane human life. His theatre is a means to step outside the common reality into a higher socio-political one and to stage the tensions and discontents of the

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<sup>15</sup> Paolo Toschi's *Le origini del teatro italiano* Le – that discusses ancient agricultural rituals celebrating the beginning of a new year – inspired Fo in his early career. Despite carnival being the primary period of such rites, in some parts of Italy similar festivities were celebrated on Easter and / or May Day.

<sup>16</sup> Sogliuzzo 73.

community. Fo's theatrical technique works against the conventions of realistic and naturalistic drama and particularly against the 'fourth wall' as he devises the 'third act' in his plays. Fo is against all those aesthetic aspects that construct barriers between performer and spectator and

**Naturalistic Drama – This movement started in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and gathered momentum in early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Naturalist writers were influenced by the evolution theories of Charles Darwin. They believed that heredity and environment decides an individual's character. They also developed the conventions of the fourth wall, placing the audiences as the outside observers.**

reduce the spectator to a condition of passivity. As Farrell quotes Fo:

Is the fourth wall only that magic, rectangular space? ...No, it is also the footlights which create a particular kind of atmosphere...the corpse like make-up on actor's faces, their gestures and their habit of emitting sounds in special cadences...which put the spectator in the condition of a peeping Tom spying on a story which has nothing to do with him and which is on the other side to the fourth wall.<sup>17</sup>

Fo does away with this naturalistic convention and brings back an important aspect of the traditional theatre i.e. 'the aside' which invites the audience to participate and thus theatre becomes a communal affair. This way the actor can denounce the character from outside and can

**Epic Theatre - A theatrical movement arising in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century from the theories of Piscator, Mayakovsky and Brecht. Epic theatre is a kind of drama which is narrated and presents an argument. It turns the spectator into an observer and arouses his capacity for action. The epic approach to drama utilizes montage, contradiction and interruption.**

act in an 'epic' mode with all its chorality and projections intact. Here Fo is inspired both by Piscator and Brecht's theory of epic theatre and 'Alienation effect' and by popular epic performances that make the familiar bizarre and allows the spectator to engagingly criticize from a social perspective. Epic theatre aims to locate the downtrodden into the centre of the literary culture so as to negate all that bourgeois theatre of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries stood for. Brecht promoted what he called 'non-Aristotelian' theatre, which replaces Aristotle's focus on pity to a willingness to

help and his fear with a curiosity to know causality. Fo's ideal is the public theatre, where the collective problems of the whole community could be staged. So he also dismisses Stanislavsky's idea of a private, closed theatre, where personal sufferings or individual relationships are examined and where the actor loses his essence or emotional identity in that of the character.

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<sup>17</sup> Farrell141.

In his initial years, Fo was most inspired by the works of Strehler and Franco Parenti who introduced him to the craft and profession of theatre-making. But it was Fo who through his theatrical style brought back the performance skills of popular traditions on stage. So when his company toured different towns, he refused to compromise on scenery and stage paraphernalia. His model of theatre, political or otherwise, involved the whole paraphernalia of costumes, creatively designed sets, ornate lighting effects and props. The use of elaborate costumes, accessories for disguise and masks in both 'commedia dell'arte' and ancient theatre fascinated Fo. Fo feels indebted to the Greeks as they invented everything in use in a modern theatre: the stage equipment, machines, towers, cranes, mobile bridges, trolleys, sound effects and fireworks. The Greeks used every trick from mobile scenery to reflectors and foreshortening effects to enhance the effect of the performance and to make optimum utilization of the space. Their stage paraphernalia created an illusion of a larger cosmic reality that was the governing principle of the collective life of the community. They also emphasized upon the constant epic alienation of the performer from the character and required him not to forget his role as narrator. Mime and pantomime also played an important role in Greek drama where to mime meant to narrate with body, voice and masks, to perform tricks on stilts, to dance, perform acrobatics, to act and sing. Mime is an art of communication by fusion that does not aim to

### Masks



### Costumes



## 6 Masks, Costumes and Props in Ancient Greek Drama - [artsedge.kennedy-center.org/greece/theater](http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/greece/theater)

imitate natural gestures but appeals to the imagination and intensifies pleasure which is one of the functions of theatre. Fo has learned all these 'tricks' from ancient and popular theatrical traditions and has fashioned a theatre as a tribute to them. While touring, his stage ensemble is fully equipped to handle the improvisations of the plot and script. Fo's touring company (Nuova Scena) would adapt cinemas, halls or disused theatres to create performance spaces. But whatever the space, Fo always insisted upon some form of recognizable, properly equipped stage. Though an activist theatre personality, Fo refuses to view poetics of theatre as secondary to the political in theatre. As he says about his experiences:

When we arrived to put on a play at 'houses of the people', we would turn up with a lorry packed with materials, and would spend the whole day creating a special stage. We would put up the lights, perhaps as many as forty or fifty reflectors ... we must avoid at all costs giving them the impression that we are offering 'minor theatre', something tossed together, a theatre which is not up to using those means which, consciously or unconsciously, they are used to.<sup>18</sup>

Fo operates in the unconventional medium of theatre that has been ignored by theatre historians. The distance between writing and performance is minimal in his case. He creates a spectacle through his use of stage machinery, popular elements and politically radical ideas. Dario Fo considers the script, the acting and the whole paraphernalia as central to the complete performance that is intended to create an impact on and convey a message to the spectator or the audience. Fo has always believed that 'Theatre is the pretense of reality, not its imitation.'<sup>19</sup> And the stage apparatus that projects the larger political reality and encourages the audience to a reaction enhances this pretense.

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<sup>18</sup> Farrell 81.

<sup>19</sup> Dario Fo's *The Tricks of the Trade*, Trans. Joe Farrell (London: Methuen, 1991).

## 2.2 Intellectual Background of the Age

The intellectual climate of the age Fo lived and performed in was as volatile as the political one. The Russian Revolution (1917) gave a new impetus to the working class cultural and political pronouncements across Europe. Influenced by the socialist and cultural theories of Karl Marx, writers composed literary works that had specific ideological function in the social setup, based on the author's ideology and background. In essence, Marxists rejected the belief that a work of art is a result of divine inspiration or pure artistic endeavour, and argued instead that socio-economic conditions and ideology determine its production. Works of literature, for them, are social instruments to raise issues of class struggle. For Marx the relationship between literature and the economic modes of production was an interactive one. The great impact of Marx and Friedrich Engels' theories of Socialism could be felt only after the Russian Revolution of 1917. Amongst the most influential non-Soviet Marxist critic was George Lukacs, a Hungarian who joined the Communist Party in 1918, and later changed his base to Russia. His discussions on Marxist theories of literature and criticism, delineated in works such as *Die Eigenart des Asthetischen* (1963), remains central to Marxist school of literature and criticism. Marxism has immensely influenced western writers like Richard Wright, Claude McKay, Jean Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir and James Joyce. Richard Wright, in his stories such as "Long Black Song" and "Down by the Riverside", explores the central tenets of Marxism. In Claude McKay's works Marxist theory provides a framework to address the questions of racial inequality and injustice. Similar is the case of modern African writings where the literature of nationalism and decolonization seeks to articulate a new African identity. It's the cultural nationalism that impelled writers like Ngugi wa Thiong'o to write for the struggle for socio-political change in the post-colonial state in Kenya. Colonial writers have distorted Kenya's history because Kenya's working class, the workers and peasants are marginalized in the country's narrative history. Ngugi seeks to intervene and salvage the history of the subaltern from the ruins of the colonial plunder. In his *Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, Ngugi criticizes the African elite that captured state power at independence as mere watchdogs of western capitalism. History is a major site for identity-formation in the post-colonial literatures. For instance, the Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe represents the Igbo oral tradition in his novels and employs the local folk tales, rituals, and proverbs in his fiction. Achebe's novels, like *Things Fall Apart*,

engage with the intersection of tradition (as represented by the Igbo culture) and modernity (epitomised by European colonial mission). Then there are writers like Wole Soyinka who have been critical of dictatorial regimes in post-colonial Nigeria and of tyrannical leaders worldwide. He demanded the cancellation of the rigged Western Nigeria Regional Elections in 1965 through a broadcast. Consequently he was sent to prison where he composed poems on tissue paper which were published in a collection titled *Poems from Prison*. Then there are scholars like Léopold Sédar Senghor whose political thought has informed not only his literary work but also his career as a statesman. Senghor and some other authors and political activists of the African diaspora who had come to study in the colonial capital of France, came up with the notion of 'negritude' which was a form of resistance against the widespread racism still practised in France. Recently, scholars such as Raymond Williams and Fredric Jameson have included cultural and political studies in their analysis of literature. All the revolutionary literature of the world interrogates the received assumptions about identity, history and class of the oppressed or 'the Other'.

The two World Wars provided a new momentum to literature and gave rise to various intellectual movements that informed the temperament of the scholars across the globe. Realism, Naturalism and Symbolism continued as point of reference and contention throughout the century while there were other important movements also like expressionism. Expressionist playwrights represented characters as types rather than individuals and employed techniques such as talking machines, minimal scenery, and telegraphic dialogue in order to convey the dehumanizing side of the twentieth century scientific and technological inventions. Major playwrights who were the pioneers of expressionist dramas include Ernst Toller and Georg Kaiser (German), and Elmer Rice and Eugene O'Neill (American). The 20<sup>th</sup> century also saw the attempted revival (which, though failed) of poetic drama, as accomplished by writers like William Butler Yeats, W. H. Auden, T. S. Eliot and Christopher Fry. There are three vital figures of 20<sup>th</sup> century drama, Eugene O'Neill (American), Bertolt Brecht (German), and Luigi Pirandello (Italian). Whereas O'Neill's plays were naturalistic, and expressionistic, Brecht's drama was heavily based on socialism and Marxism. Pirandello's major philosophical concern was the difficulty of drawing the line between illusion and reality in drama. World War II and its disastrous consequences produced a sense of total meaninglessness of human existence. This

sense was vividly articulated through the theatre of the absurd. The absurdist playwrights did some of the traditional devices of drama like logical plot development, meaningful dialogue, and intelligible characters, away with in order to convey the alienation and despair of the modern individual. Characters in the absurdist drama often appear as duped and clownish human beings who although not without dignity, are mostly at the mercy of forces that are beyond their comprehension. Eugene Ionesco's *Bald Soprano* (1950) and Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1953) are two of the most representative plays of the Theatre of the Absurd. The origins of the Theatre of the Absurd can be traced back to avant-garde movements such as Surrealism, Dadaism, Existentialism, traditional burlesque and in the films of Charlie Chaplin. The existentialist dramas of Jean-Paul Sartre, the realistic and symbolic theatre of Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams, and the surrealist plays of Jean Cocteau seek to capture pessimism and the senselessness of the 20<sup>th</sup> century Europe. The Theatre of Cruelty, a form of drama derived from the ideas of Antonin Artaud, resembles the absurdist plays insofar as it attempts to unsettle its audience with exaggerated movements and non-naturalistic sounds that result in an instinctive rather than an intellectual reaction. For many playwrights of the 1930s and 1940s, Artaud's methods gave an adequate expression to the violence of World War II and the subsequent threat of the holocaust. The 20th century, particularly in its last decades, was an era of experiments and iconoclasm. A postmodernist infatuation with improvisational techniques, performance art, and other kinds of avant-garde theatre became the defining feature of the experimental drama of the 1960s and 1970s—a spirit epitomized in the productions by theatre groups such as New York's La MaMa (1961–) and Mabou Mines (1970–) and Chicago based Steppenwolf Theatre Co. (1976–). Moreover, the mass movements against social injustice such as the civil rights, women's movements, gay rights movement, and the AIDS crisis provided an added impetus to the impetus for new plays that dealt with the lives of women and other marginalized sections of the society. Plays such as Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959)—a drama by and about African Americans, inaugurated a significant theatrical trend. Similarly, plays such as James Baldwin's *Blues for Mr. Charley* (1964) and Charles Gordone's *No Place to Be Somebody* (1967) examined the life of the Afro-Americans in the so-called American “melting pot”. This engagement with themes based on the lives and experiences of the Afro-American was taken forward in the next decade by August Wilson, who debuted on Broadway with *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* (1984). Lives of women dramatized by female/feminist playwrights such as

England's Caryl Churchill (*Top Girls*, 1982) and the Cuban-American experimentalist Maria Irene Fornés (e.g. *Fefu and Her Friends*, 1977) was another major preoccupation of the 1970s and 1980s. Provocative female-themed one-woman shows such as Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues* (1996), solo theatrical performances by Lily Tomlin, Karen Finley, Anna Devereare Smith, Sarah Jones, and plays based on the lives of the gays constitute a significant portion of the dramatic oeuvre of the later decades of the twentieth century.

### 2.3 Political Influences

Apart from theatre, Dario Fo has been involved in many political activities that have rocked Italy

**Fascism – Refers to an extreme form of nationalism that acquired political currency during the inter-war years. The defining features of fascism are surrender of the individual to the state, insistence on one-party rule and investment of inscrutable authority in the hands of a dictator. In its programme for rebuilding the nation, Fascism lays emphasis on national, racial, or cultural unity by seeking to eliminate imagined enemies. It discredits both revolutionary movements as well as liberal pluralism in favor of a militarized totalitarian political regime. European Fascism was triggered by the Russian Revolution and the humiliating terms of the truce pacts which concluded the first world war. Later, the fascist ideology spread to the other parts of Europe.**

in the last decades. His theatre has been deeply political, especially in the sixties and seventies when the plot of many of his plays was taken from the headlines of the day. Fo has always been caught up in complex political and moral debates, as he grew up in a confused and violent era when fascist Italy was in a state of civil war. Fascism arose in Italy because the liberal parliamentary regime could not solve the problems arising from the First World War. Under the stress of economic hardships and social unrest, the business class turned to support the Fascists. After Mussolini had seized political power in 1922, he maintained himself in power by imposing a strict control of the political, economic and social life of the Italian people. From 1929 to 1939, Mussolini completed the building-up of the totalitarian state in Italy. In 1938, the Fascist Grand Council abolished the Parliament, and set up in its place an Assembly of

Corporations which consisted of representatives from twenty-two industrial and professional corporations. In other words, the parliamentary system in Italy came to an end. In 1939, though Italy remained, in name, a monarchy, Mussolini, as the Duce of the Fascist Party, was the uncrowned King of Italy. He believed that he was always right and no one dared to oppose him.

When Italy entered World War II, Mussolini's war aims were to gain domination of the Mediterranean basin and of Africa and of the Middle East as well. In this way fascist Italy hoped to become a world power and re-establish the power balance between fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. But these political ambitions were thwarted by subsequent military defeats and the consequential loss of support of the industrialists (who had earlier been a major economic support). In 1943 the Allied forces (Britain), landed in Sicily and Mussolini was briefly imprisoned before being freed by Germans. The advance of the Allied forces split the

**Communism - It is a social organization founded on the doctrine: "From each according to their ability, to each according to their need." It envisages an egalitarian utopia that dissolves social classes, does away with coercive governmental structures, and aims to achieve a condition of social life in which does not require supervision from a ruling class. The theory was popularized by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels' *Communist Manifesto* (1848).**

country in two, with the South under Allied control and the North ruled by Mussolini. The overthrow of fascism was followed by the consequent collapse of the Italian state. Though all the anti-fascist parties – Socialists, Christian Democrats and even the liberal-monarchists – took part in the Resistance (the Allied forces' fight against Mussolini's fascist regime), it was the Communists who controlled the majority of the partisan formations. Communism has its roots in the Italian political and social thought since the 19<sup>th</sup> century when PSI (Italian Socialist Party) was the dominant leftist party in the country. But there was a split in PSI in 1921 that resulted in the formation of PCd'I (Communist Party of Italy), one of whose founding members was Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937). When the fascist regime banned the PCI in 1926, they arrested and imprisoned Gramsci from 1926 until 1937. Gramsci's major

contribution to Communist thought was his theory of "cultural hegemony." He contended that it wasn't sufficient to destroy Capitalist economic and political structures. A complete Marxist revolution must also attack the cultural system upon which "bourgeois values" were based. In his *Prison Notebooks* (1929-1935), Gramsci delineates

Italian history and nationalism and stresses upon the need for educating workers to develop intellectuals from the working class. He also offers critique of economic determinism and materialism and dwells upon the dual domination of the proletariat by the two constituents of the State: the political society (law, police, Church) and the civil society (family, schools). Gramsci

has become a canonical figure within the Western Marxist practice, as his ideas offer radical alternatives to both social democratic and capitalist bureaucratic models.

Dario Fo, inevitably, became caught up in the anarchy spread around during the Resistance. In spite of his innate anti-fascism, Fo did not join the Allied side and later joined fascist



**7. Antonio Gramsci - [www.nndb.com/people/461/000094179/](http://www.nndb.com/people/461/000094179/)**

forces in 1944 in order to survive. For several years, Fo grappled with his failure to support the partisans. But the Resistance, for him, becomes to signify the great myth of liberation as it represented a betrayed revolution evident in the left's defeat in the first democratic elections in 1948. This realization is evident and featured in his plays written in the 60s and 70s – 'Remember and relive the Resistance' was the slogan of his post-1968 theatre. After the war, Italy saw the rise of the new, left-inclined intelligentsia that took Antonio Gramsci's writings as the point of political reference. In one of his central political argument, Gramsci emphasized on the importance of creating a counter thought process that would ultimately challenge the ideological dominance of the elite. It has been Fo's aim to develop this counter consciousness through his drama where he employs the popular traditions to salvage the subaltern groups. Gramsci, in his early writings, shifts the emphasis of Marxist theory from economics to culture and includes it in his analysis of the power structures of society. Gramsci

argues that the privileged elites promote the high, aesthetic culture to maintain authority and

**Farce – It is a type of comedy designed to provoke the spectator to ‘belly laughs’. To do so it employs caricatured character types. Farce was part of the comic episodes in miracle plays as well as Renaissance drama.**

neglect the popular culture of the subaltern classes. Fo’s familiarity with Gramscian theories make him see cultural change, which could be worked by theatre, as a tool for the decolonization of the mind. Gramsci calls for a re-evaluation of popular culture so as to shape not only the future cultural space but also to reshape the past one. So he gives higher priority to ancient and neglected theatrical forms like farce and challenges the hierarchical positions awarded to tragedy and comedy. When on the one hand, Beckett, Adamov and Ionesco in France found art forms like the farce a most

suitable means of communicating the meaninglessness and absurdity of life, Fo used it as a frame of reference for human society and existence. Fo rehabilitates farce and considers it the ‘most noble – and modern – genre of theatre’.<sup>20</sup> Gramsci saw education and cultural knowledge as a means to enable the proletariat to take conscious control of the forces and material conditions that mould his life thus emphasizing upon the need to build upon regional strengths and popular energies. In this connection Gramsci, in an essay ‘Socialism and Culture’, says:

...every revolution has been preceded by a long process of intense critical activity, of new cultural insight and the spread of ideas through groups of men initially resistant to them.<sup>21</sup>

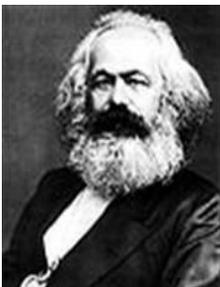
For this purpose, Fo develops on the long tradition of the giullare, commedia dell’arte and other forms of popular culture that were critical of the state authority. Fo sees popular traditions as the source of self-awareness necessary for the masses to understand their value and place in history, so that they can emerge from the poverty laden chaos and fight to regain their place in history and society. Art, as Lenin says, ‘is a small cog in the mechanism of the class struggle’<sup>22</sup> and revolution is not possible without this component of culture. Thus Fo’s theatre fulfills the didactic purpose and intervenes socially and politically.

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<sup>20</sup> Farrell 47.

<sup>21</sup> Antonio Gramsci’s *Pre-Prison Writings*. Trans, Virginia Cox. Ed, Richard Bellamy (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 10.

<sup>22</sup> Farrell140.



8 Louis Althusser -

[www.filedb.com/author/louis\\_althusser/649085](http://www.filedb.com/author/louis_althusser/649085)

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Apart from Gramsci and Lenin, much of current Marxist opinion on literature and culture has been influenced by the work of the French Marxist thinker Louis Althusser (1918-1990). Althusser reworks the Marxist understanding of the interrelationship between

base and superstructure and adds the concept of "ideological state apparatuses", or the ISAs. According to Marx the modes of production the base, and superstructure includes political and legal institutions such as police, education, religious institutions as well as state governance. To this formulation, Althusser adds the distinction between state power and state control. State power is sustained by the repressive structures (law courts, prisons, police and army) which operate by external force. But the power of the state is also maintained more subtly, by appearing to obtain the inner approval of its citizens through State ideological apparatuses. These are political parties, schools, the media, the church, the family and art that promote an ideology that is sympathetic to the ambitions of the state and the political status quo. Ideology is a key term for Althusser. Moving away from the earlier understanding of ideology as "false consciousness" (a false understanding of the way the world functioned) Althusser sees it as a system of 'representations (images, myths, ideas or concepts according to the case) endowed with an existence and an historical role at the heart of a given society.'<sup>23</sup> So ideology, for Althusser, has not much to do with consciousness but with culture (including literature) that becomes a vital carrier of the values that strengthen the status quo in any society. The significance of these Althusserian ideas is to provide a much more subtle view of how society works than that offered by traditional Marxism. Althusser stresses that ideological power is of greater significance than material power. Thus literature becomes important, as it is not just a passive reflector of the base/superstructure dichotomy but a medium to expose the subtle and indirect domination by the hegemonic authorities and ideological representations. The key terms and ideas in Althusser become important to understand the invisible or seemingly 'natural' modes of social control that trick the individual into believing that he is a free agent while there is no choice offered. Capitalism thrives on these tricks and imposes things on the people. This interpellation can be

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<sup>23</sup> Peter Barry's *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (Manchester and New York: Manchester UP, 1999) 163.

exposed only through art (or more specifically through literature). Here we are reminded of the purpose of Fo's theatre that exposes the great power/control propaganda of the state. Through his theatre, Fo builds up strategies and tensions to stir up the brainwashed proletariat and common man. Fo understands these revisionist Marxist ideas and so by practicing a radical and nonconformist theatre, he rejects the idea of art being solely controlled by economic forces and decentres the state controlled structures. His theatre is relatively autonomous of the pressures exerted by economic forces; this is the reason that he has time and again dissociated himself from those theatrical and political organizations that gradually start following the state sponsored ideology.

In 1960, there were heavy demonstrations by labour unions in Italy against the neo-fascist MSI's (Italian Social Movement) involvement in the formation of the Christian democratic government. This working class activity influenced the theme of Fo's play *He had Two Pistols and Black and White Eyes* based on a fascist petty criminal and a Christian Democrat priest. However it is only in 1968 that Fo started writing for an essentially working-class audience and composed a play *Big Pantomime with Flags and Puppets*, which had no real characters, just social categories like Capital, the CBI, the Puppet-king (representing the State) and the Dragon (representing an aggressive working class). The introduction of puppets added possibilities for extensive satire and for amusing distortions of political leaders. In this period, Fo took theatre to people's houses and rural towns supported by ARCI, the cultural wing of PCI. He blends Marxist agit-prop with performance techniques drawn from the 'commedia dell'arte.'

**Agit-prop** – The term derives from the Soviet Communist Party's Agitation and Propaganda department, which performed short agitational sketches to the Red Army during the Russian revolution. Agit-prop groups in Germany, during this time, counteracted the reactionary policy of the established theatres.

abbreviation of "agitation and propaganda" and the term gave rise to an extremely politicized leftist theatre in which the playwrights expose the propaganda of the authority which works through misinformation, distortion and suppression of facts. The Agit-prop plays were targeted to provoke workers, students, peasants and masses, so that they overthrow not only foreign domination and poverty

but also the false reality and system of thought that they had inherited from previous generation. The idea is to provide counter-information and agitate the audience to anger and critical analysis of their situation and to ultimately bring about change and revolution. Fo has been the foremost practitioner of agit-prop theatre and believes that ideological commitment is most important to this theatre. Following similar perspective in his drama, Fo exposes the hypocrisy and anti-people character of the bourgeois society and of its sacred and powerful institutions – the police, the judiciary, the Church and the media. He sees theatre as a form of exchange, whereby he puts in his contribution to receive something in return from the audiences' reactions and suggestions. Though ARCI and Fo's theatre group worked together for a period, both sides realized soon enough that they had different political agendas. Fo's theatre group practised an extremely egalitarian and socialist organizational structure while PCI had communist yet conservative and reformist agendas. Fo aims at subversion through theatrical activity in which he exposes absurdity to an extreme, revealing the brutality of the State. His drama has progressed from being the episodic panoramas of Italian history to intense political satires where he denounces Italy's political system and also expresses his disenchantment with Italian communism.

### ***3 Accidental Death of An Anarchist***

#### **3.1 The Lord of Misrule**

*Accidental Death of An Anarchist* is a farce which was first performed in December 1970, is grounded in a very precise, perturbing political reality. A year earlier on 12 December 1969, a bomb exploded in the Agricultural Bank in Piazza Fontana in Milan, killing 16 people and injuring a hundred. This was one of the many bomb explosions (there were 173 bomb attacks in Italy before 1970) which marked the volatile political situation in Italy in the late 60s and 70s. Careful inquiries over time revealed that the blasts were carried out by neo-fascist groups supported by the state. Right-wing political violence most strongly manifested itself in this period. This was a period of student and youth agitation, new social movements including women's and gay liberation, widespread social unrest and trade union militancy in Italy. The neo-

Fascist terrorists groups of this period opposed all this left wing activity and often planted bombs in public places which killed dozens of innocent civilians. All this was part of a so-called 'strategy of tension', a campaign designed to lead to a breakdown of law and order and consequent collapse of public confidence in democratically elected government, accelerating a takeover by the army. In twelve years from



**9** At least 13 were killed at Milan's Banca wounded in Bolognadell' Agricoltura in Piazza Fontana

**10** 85 were killed and at least 200 were bombing in 1980 - [dossierjournal.com/read/film/il-divo-primer/](http://dossierjournal.com/read/film/il-divo-primer/)

[news.bbc.co.uk/.../12/newsid\\_3953000/3953999.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/.../12/newsid_3953000/3953999.stm)

1969 to 1980, 4,298 terrorist incidents took place in which neo-fascists were responsible for most of them. The last and most horrible of such attacks was the worst terrorist attack in Europe in the 20th century - the bombing of the Bologna train station which killed 85 people and injured at least 200. After the bombing in the Milan bank, a young anarchist, Giuseppe Pinelli, was arrested, along with a ballet dancer, Pietro Valpreda. Pinelli was killed when his body flew out of the fourth floor of the police headquarters where he was being interrogated while Valpreda remained in prison for ten years. Left-wing newspaper *Lotta Continua* accused the inspector in charge, Calabrese, of causing Pinelli's death, and he in turn instigated a lawsuit against the paper. It was during this period that Fo performed this play all over Italy. Each performance incorporated the latest court findings and the unpublished evidence. From the very start in the play, Fo negates any representation or illusion of reality on stage and uses minimal and useful stage apparatus unlike the ornamental stage design of the naturalist or bourgeois theatre. The goal of naturalist playwrights is to create an absolute illusion: the lights go down, the curtain

risers, action begins, and viewers lose all sense of themselves as thinkers and identify with the characters and story. In naturalistic drama the grandiose and elite stage motif has a soothing and diverting impact on the audiences' mind and contributes to the cathartic purging of antagonistic emotions. So, Fo's presentation of an 'ordinary room' in Police Headquarters with nominal paraphernalia is a proclamation of his solidarity with popular theatre. They are no mere props but essential tools used in the course of action. Fo does not need over-the-top gags and characters with bizarre expressionistic make-up, as the thrust of the theme is itself emphatic. Here Fo invents a central



11 The Madman in the police station and the essential stage machinery - <http://www.dallastheatercenter.org/.../AccidentalDeathofAnAnarchistSTUDYGUIDE.pdf>

character who calls himself a Histrioniac: “from histriones – that’s Latin – meaning an actor. I cannot stop myself becoming different characters.”<sup>24</sup> In commenting on himself as an actor, the actor achieves a self-reflexive moment where a work of art reflects on itself as artifice. This self-reflexivity distances and alerts the audience with which the illusion is broken and the fourth wall is dissolved. This is the case with all the revolutionary theatre which deals with the aspirations of the masses and the working class. Similarly most of the scenes of Ngugi’s *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* are placed on ‘the street’ where the peasants and workers are to be seen, for whom and by whom the real freedom is to be won. The Madman here reminds the audience that a play is being acted out, so prevents them from losing themselves unthinkingly in the action. The madman is an impersonator in whose alleged madness there is throughout a sound logic. He reveals his insane logic in action from the very beginning, when he inventively manipulates language in order to misrepresent himself through the information on his visiting card which reads, ‘Professor Antonio Rabbi. Psychiatrist. Former Lecturer at Padua, University’. Such

<sup>24</sup> Dario Fo’s *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*. Trans Alan Cumming and Tim Supple. Ed, Christopher Cairns (London: Methuen, 1991) 3.

manipulation of language is the ideal weapon against fabrication of the facts caused by the police and the media. Later also when he impersonates the Counsel to the High Court, he is very particular about getting the right accent as one does not get ‘high-powered people from the provinces.’<sup>25</sup> The question of language has for ages been connected with concerns of social status, politics and culture. The standard Italian language is a creation of the television era of the mass media and is language of the learned elite. It is a hybrid language which is homogenised and Fo becomes part of a movement to reject ‘this lowest common denominator of communication’ (as Hirst says)<sup>26</sup> and preserve and promote the individual regional dialects of Italy. Dialect is seen by Fo as a significant legacy of Italian popular culture and an essential constituent in the struggle for a working class hegemony. Similar idea is valid in post-colonial societies where writers like Ngugi (*Decolonising the Mind*) see English and other European languages playing the destructive role in subverting the indigenous cultures of Africa. Thus he uses Kenyan words and sentences in songs and dialogues in his *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* to show the determination of his people to be free of colonial legacy. In case of Dario Fo – though his farces are in standard Italian, Fo’s giullarate (one-man shows)<sup>27</sup> are performed in dialects which become instruments of cultural enlightenment for the spectators. There is an extraordinary significance of the ‘spectacle’ created, in Fo’s giullarate, out of class and cultural struggle. It becomes a means of cultural expression with the use of particular working class expressions, slogans, sounds that are expressed in forms of grotesque and sarcasm; whistling, dancing to a particular rhythm and inventing rhyming shouts. So here in the play the overuse of punctuation, a part of the officially sanctioned language, is a means to ridicule the state authority that uses such linguistic medium to empower itself. And the madman’s masquerade as Professor Rabbi (the word means madness in Italian) is only a preamble to a series of impersonations that follow after this. This initial ‘solo performance’ by the madman unnerves inspector Bertozzo but seems very familiar to Fo’s audience as they can trace its cultural lineage to the giullare tradition. The madman’s monologues and conversations rely on varied discourses like his appropriation of the particular languages of the grammarian, of the psychologist, of the judge, of the defence personnel and of the church, to subvert the dominant ideas. Fo’s drama validates and elevates

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<sup>25</sup> Cairns 13.

<sup>26</sup> Hirst 29.

<sup>27</sup> Fo’s major ‘giullarate’ and the years in which they premiered are *Mister Buffo* (1969), *The Tale of a Tiger* (1977), *Obscene Fables* (1982), *Johan Padan and the Discovery of Americas* (1991), *Francis, The Holy Jester* (1999).

folk and carnival culture through which he undermines authority and delivers his political and social messages. The madman here is akin to the lord of Misrule of the carnivalesque tradition who takes over authority in order to invert the existing hegemonic arrangements. So here Fo combines two modes of performance: the satirical farce and the giullare tradition, the former structure provides counter-information while the latter awakens the spectator to the knowledge of social divisions like the oppressor/oppressed, dominant/dominated and so on. Fo fulfills the duty of the Marxist intellectual who helps the masses regain a sense of dignity and admiration of their culture. Dario Fo's theatre is based on popular forms of performance like popular farces, clown shows and comic films of the silent screen (shows of Charlie Chaplin). *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* is a farce that depicts a temporary suspension of order where Fo destabilizes the normality of the bourgeois establishment and suggests replacement with an alternative one. The maniac stands dominant structures on their heads and puts eminent figures in debasing manner and mocks at them. After being thrown out of the police station by Inspector Bertozzo, the madman returns and takes advantage of a phone conversation to comment on and reappear in the guise of a judge. He gives the audience a whole catalogue of the consequences of old age on miners, clerks, workers and contrasts their fate with that of a judge:

And the judge, half-blind, half-crippled, half-senile. Give him a knighthood, a rise in salary and put him in charge of a commission that's going to affect the lives of millions of people...these national treasures exercise a power to destroy or save us with less deliberation than they choose which Chablis to accompany their fish.<sup>28</sup>

An important thing to note is that he does not rely on any personal experience but on lists of popular images of the routine life of these categories, as the objective here is counter-informational rather than illustrative. The monologue that follows stresses a lot of physical movement which is rapid, dynamic and radical. Playing the role of the examining magistrate, the madman selectively destroys the case files and thus exposes the arbitrariness of justice; at the same time, also offers a reversal of the established judicial system in favour of its victims. Fo develops a theatre which does not merely reflect but documents and actively participates in the

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<sup>28</sup> Cairns 8.

collective life and struggles of his audience and becomes a form of collective political action. He uses the performative taken from the medieval tradition of strolling players and his madman is the modern-day Harlequin. He like a giullari is both a fragmented and a collective personality whose all encompassing bag of tricks contains apparels and accessories that bring in improvisation to maintain a political immediacy to the performance. The madman's bag is symbolic of the weaponry of the theatre which threatens the drama of power/control performed by the state. Improvisation, in this heavily politicized play, offers varied possibilities of confrontation to the homogenous official narrative of lies. In general, Fo's characters are symbolic signifiers of sociopolitical problems. In this connection Suzanne Cowan says:

There are no "characters," in the psychological sense, only types or personifications – the madman, policeman, politician, union bureaucrat, worker, the bourgeoisie, and so forth. Actors can, and often do, change roles in the middle of a play.<sup>29</sup>

Change in disguise indicates shift in the issue during the performance. The madman's madness in *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, has a method, he is gifted with wit and enjoys a fool's license to blurt out truths which the authorities would prefer to suppress. In this upturned modern world, the madman is the only arbiter of sense and reason. His is 'a blasphemous voice of the people, an alter ego for the masses,'<sup>30</sup> whose call for radical social change and nonviolent proletarian revolution is a reminder of the 'liberating role'<sup>31</sup> of the improvisatory 'commedia dell'arte' performers.

### **3.2 State versus The Proletariat**

The play's provocative thematic concerns are determined by its theatrical form which is embedded in tragedy but thrives on farce – the farce of power. The spectators - students, workers and members of lower middle class, are overwhelmed by the grotesque and absurdly comic performance. However as the performance progresses, they realise that they are laughing the whole time at real events that expose the brutality of the state. Here Fo ruptures the Althusserian interpellation and makes the gullible audience see the macabre show of power and injustice as

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<sup>29</sup> Suzanne Cowan's "The Throw-Away Theatre of Dario Fo." *The Drama Review* 19.2 (1975)109.

<sup>30</sup> James Fisher's "Minstrel of the Proletariat." *The Drama Review* 36.4 (1992) 172.

<sup>31</sup> Cowan109.

perpetuated in the present social set-up. Madman's role-playing becomes instrumental in unmasking the criminal folly of the police and is also the source of counter-information. As judge – Marco Maria Malipiero, first councilor to the High Court, the Maniac points loopholes

**Anarchism – A political philosophy and movement opposed to the authority of the State and its institutions. It is based on the conviction that equality and justice can only be achieved through the abolition of the State and the substitution of free agreements between individuals.**

in the multiple versions given by the police of the anarchist's death. He forces Inspector Pisani, the Superintendent and the Constable to literally re-enact the events of the night the anarchist died, with hilarious outcomes and gets them to admit that they completely misinformed the suspect in order to extract a confession. With their deception technique, they lied to him that his comrade, the dancer, has confessed to planting the bomb in the pub. He ruptures their theory of 'raptus' - a 'form of suicidal anxiety which can overcome quite sane people if they are provoked into a state of desperate anguish'<sup>32</sup> and exposes the officially sanctioned network of lies and cover-ups surrounding the murder of a young, innocent railway man:

First, you arbitrarily pull in a free citizen. Next you abuse your authority and hold him beyond the legal time. Then you severely traumatize the poor man by telling him you have proof he planted the bomb in the railway station, then you intentionally lead him to believe he'll lose his job... he is told his friend and comrade is a murdering bastard, guilty of the Milan massacre.<sup>33</sup>

This is the exact goal of Fo's counter-information, while pursuing the truth, he ridicules the State machinery and exposes the farce of justice. The madman further frightens the policemen into a more ironic re-enactment of former events in which they are made to believe that the state is using them as scapegoats to salvage their impaired reputation. He convinces them that the only

**The Internationale - Eugene Pottier, a woodworker from Lille, wrote this in French after the fall of the Paris Commune of 1871—the first time workers took state power into their own hands—and set to music by P. Degeyter. The song has been used as a symbol of resistance to oppression the world over.**

<sup>32</sup> Cairns 23.

<sup>33</sup> Cairns 27.

choice left to them is to jump out of the window and performs a chilling reversal of the previous situation. Here he demonstrates ‘how a



fertile imagination and a pack of lies can inspire a suicidal crisis’<sup>34</sup>. Furthermore, the central paradox throughout the play is that the Maniac manipulates fiction to get at the

## 12. The Madman pushing the policemen out of the window

[http://www.brutefarce.co.uk/Brute Farce Accidental Death.htm](http://www.brutefarce.co.uk/Brute_Farce_Accidental_Death.htm)

truth. After this he changes the course of investigation to apparently help and support the policemen’s alteration of the time of the interrogation (moved back four hours) in order to absolve them of any liability in the anarchist’s ‘jump’ to death. The policemen see the Judge as their saviour so as to expose a close nexus or criminal collaboration between the police and the judiciary. In the play realism is associated with covering up the truth and the madman’s unrealistic behaviour is connected to unconventional theatre (guerilla or agit-prop theatre) and truth that exposes the lies of the authorities. The police are encouraged to invent more details of their kindness and humanity - from giving the accused a piece of chewing gum to recalling their childhood love of playing with toy trains through to their collective singing of *The Internationale*.



*The Internationale* is an international socialist, communist, social democratic and anarchist anthem.<sup>35</sup> Again fiction and reality intersect and the madman leads the spectator into a vigorous and investigative collaboration with the theatrical process in order to challenge the ideological nature of the official reality. Here Fo develops upon the modern concept that there is no single, objective

reality or truth. Every individual grapples with his/her own subjective reality and hence the idea of multiple narratives. The exposition of the multilateral facets of this incident to the general

<sup>34</sup> Cairns 31.

<sup>35</sup> Versions of *The Internationale* in Indian languages have existed since the 1950s when the translation of the song was done by the legendary actor and social activist Premji for the people of the Indian state of Kerala and for the united Communist Party of India. In the 1980s, more translations appeared, done by Sachidanandan, Mokeri Ramachandran and an unknown translator.

public is made possible through literature here, as the official records displayed only the state approved version. So Fo's didactic drama, mainly this play, become an instrument of social and political enlightenment for the popular mind. Fo, like Brecht, lets his audience experience a multifaceted narrative using the epic style that transcends the merely linguistic. Multiple perspectives have ideological implications since the sense of multiplicity and of popular culture represented by the central performer, in this play, exude an anarchical vigour which is vital to public performance. This anarchistic spirit is visible in the popular culture that thrives on a desire for freedom from suppressive official, elite culture. So such spirit poses threat to any power structure that depends on the linear, immovable and absolute viewpoint. Dramatists like Brecht and Fo disliked the exclusion from theatre of all direct commentary, alternative consciousness and differing points of view. They employ the conventions of the chorus, the narrator and the soliloquy as a means for breaking up illusion of reality in drama and present a complex and multidimensional view of things and situations.

*Accidental Death of an Anarchist* is a counter-enquiry into official responsibility for the massacre in Piazza Fontana and the theatrical format is Fo's unique style of farce. In the play, Fo refuses to rouse mere pity for an individual; instead, he aims to provoke scorn and anger against the ideological state apparatuses. His farce is an outgrowth of a tragic vision. The madman's techniques further prompt the policemen to prove and invent that they had tried to stop the anarchist from jumping. At this point the constable suggests that in order to stop the anarchist from jumping, he grabbed his foot due to which his shoe came off in the constable's hand. The madman points that the anarchist had one shoe on each foot when he 'lay dying on the pavement.' This revelation leads to a further crazy and contradictory logic that rouses laughter among the audience. However, the laughter is not of a nihilistic variety that suggests all life is senseless, rather it is an uncomfortable one followed by anger and hence, in Fo's view, by action and hope. These discrepancies in the official account reveal the reactionary nature of a state which betrayed the purpose of 'Resistance' because it signifies the ideological continuation of the old fascist regime. At each moment a multiple play of meaning is endowed with an image or sentiment that appeals to the imagination of the spectator and thus provokes them into an internalized debate. Fo, here, uses the comic and the farce to sensitize the masses that have

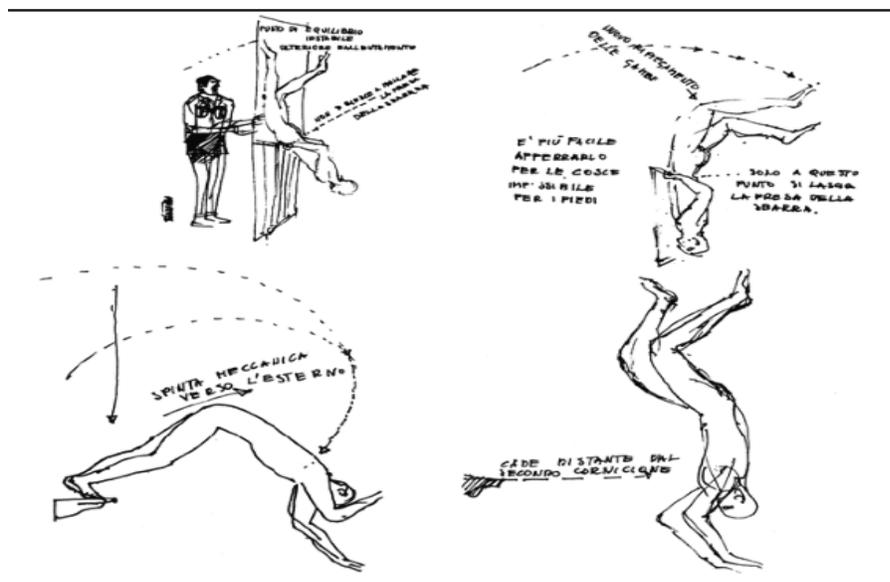
become immune to the macabre show of death, assault, and injustice because of constant media exposure.

### 3.3 Dialectics of Theatrical and Political Components



<http://www.derby.ac.uk/humanities/theatre/productions/accidental-death-of-an-anarchist>

Dario Fo never tries to conceal the theatrical element behind a naturalistic facade; on the contrary theatrical artifice is highlighted wherever possible. *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, like Ngugi's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi*, is a complex theatrical performance which works at various levels and where the dramatic effect is created by a series of onstage action and offstage sound effects. Mimes, songs, film projections, dances and folk elements are the theatrical devices used by both the theatre personalities to enhance the mass appeal of the performance. The madman frequently steps outside his character and addresses himself directly to the audience, thus breaks the fourth wall. He is a quick change artist who, when gets to know that a journalist Maria Feletti is coming to interview the Superintendent, assumes the guise of a certain Captain Marcantonio Banzi Piccinni of the forensic department. Feletti is called the vulture because she has sharp observation, is aggressive, well informed and contributes to the process of counter-information by offering a different perspective to the proceedings. Feletti's questioning unnerves these people who have not recovered from the madman's cross-examination. She points at further lapses in the police enquiry where the parabola of the fall is not mentioned and call for the ambulance was made five minutes prior to the death of the anarchist. The madman also joins the argument which shifts from this particular case to



14 Dario Fo sketched the event of the anarchist "falling" from police headquarters prior to his writing of the play, *Accidental Death of An Anarchist*. - <http://www.dallastheatercenter.org/.../AccidentalDeathofAnAnarchistSTUDYGUIDE.pdf>

the general condition of the poor who are denied justice because of their underprivileged social status. On the other hand, suave, well fed, well clad elites who smell of cologne instead of sweat are relied upon by the judges and their evidences are declared admissible. There is an intensity of argument as well as comic relief and exaggerated caricaturing of situations so that the spectator gets dialectic of opposing attitudes which provides tensions, involvement and detachment at the same time. Miss Feletti also exposes the distortions and misconceptions about the alleged 'terrorist' activities of the amateur anarchist groups that are infiltrated by the police spies and thus can never execute bombings. There is a nexus between the state and infiltrators of the police owing to which the state creates an atmosphere of confusion and anarchy. The anarchists become victims of the manipulations of the state machinery while infiltrators act as 'agent provocateurs', fulfilling the orders of the state. In the meanwhile Inspector Bertozzo enters with the 'facsimile of the bomb that destroyed the pub' and gradually identifies the Maniac but is silenced by others. The madman's disguised persona starts disintegrating when his false eye, artificial hand and leg come off during the argument. Fo's use of the grotesque is most explicit when the madman mistakenly swallows his false eye that is communicative of Fo's penchant for the grotesque representation of the human body and zoomorphic symbolism of the 'giullare' tradition and

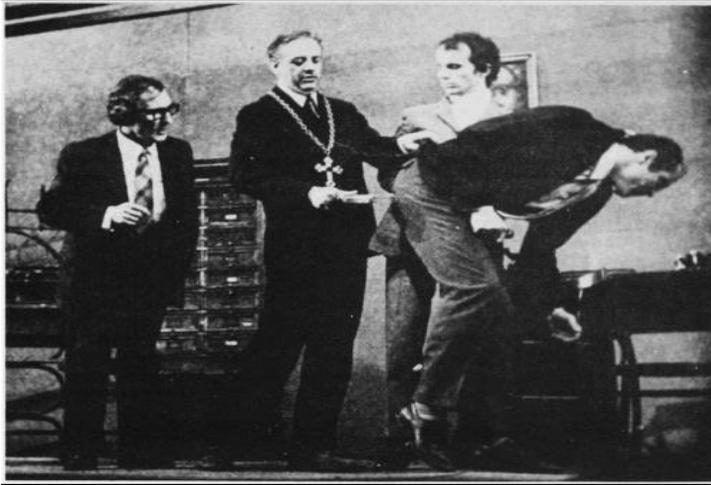
‘commedia dell’arte.’ Here Fo highlights one of the ancient grotesque representations of the human body. As the scene builds it becomes increasingly evident that the grotesquely corrupted body of the madman and the body politic are theatrical reflections of each other.

15 When Inspector Pisani and the Superintendent search for the false eye of the Madman. This image can be inserted on page no 33.

In a fresh revelation the forensic expert reveals that he is actually a priest and turns his collar around to reveal a priest’s collar. So here the most serious part of the play coincides with the most comic which reaches a limit when the madman-priest injects Bertozzo in the bottom. The scene culminates in the madman’s discourse on scandals ‘as liberating catharsis of the system’<sup>36</sup> and their utility to the public for they make the masses feel that they are living in a free society. People feel satisfied when certain organs of

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<sup>36</sup> Behan 73.



**16. The Maniac injecting Bertozzo** - Cowan, Suzanne. "The Throw-Away Theatre of Dario Fo." *The Drama Review* 19.2 (1975): 102-113. *JSTOR*. 29 Sept. 2008

<<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1922882>>.

the state point finger at their own unhealthy parts. Thus, a cathartic purging is achieved through scandals, so 'when people want real change they are given reforms'<sup>37</sup>.

17 Discussion on scandals, can be inserted on page 34.



In other words, scandals are important for the government to divert the attention of the public. And it is the media which becomes the instrument in the hands of the state to misguide people and maintain the political status quo. As the madman rightly says:

People want justice. So we make sure they get a justice that is not quite so unjust. People want to see the back of class so we mix a heady cocktail of consumer boom and social welfare, and pretend real poverty does not exist. People want participation so we sell them a few shares and tell them that true society lies in the family. And when people want real change they are given reforms, and when a crisis arrives the reforms are withdrawn and they are told to be thankful they don't

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<sup>37</sup> Cairns 68.

live in Eastern Europe.<sup>38</sup>

Here Fo comments upon the reformist agenda and opportunistic policy of PCI where it suppressed many a moments of proletarian upsurges in culture and betrayed communist and socialist ideals to seize a chance to rule with the Christian Democrats. So there is no full-fledged revolution only reform; society remains the same, only the public feels that some good has been done.

18 When Inspector Bertozzo brings out a gun and tells everyone about the reality of madman. This image can be inserted either on page 33 or 34.



So such an angered articulation by Fo is intended to rouse the audience from their stupor and make them realize their state of passivity. The play ends with the madman sitting absent-mindedly with the facsimile of the bomb. This justifies Fo's notion that the key to a performance lies in the meaningful absence between the words that is the undecipherable creative center of the performance and its very unpredictability is potentially intimidating to a system that thrives on codes. The play's abrupt ending and the sense of relative inconclusiveness or incompleteness of the action is deliberate. The most fascinating aspect of this play is that it has had different endings in different adaptations and performances. Gavin Richards, the British stage director, introduced two alternative endings, wherein the first one, the madman handcuffs the policemen and, before leaving, gives the keys to Miss Feletti. She also decides to run away and there is a massive explosion and the lights go out. Then the Madman reappears and says 'That's what I call a happy ending'<sup>39</sup>. And in the other ending, Miss Feletti unlocks handcuffs of the policemen; in return they grab and handcuff her because she knows everything. They all exit laughing and there is blackout except for a spot. Both these endings

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<sup>38</sup> Cairns 68.

<sup>39</sup> Javed Malik, ed. *Dario Fo's Accidental Death of an Anarchist: A Critical Companion*, (Delhi: Worldview, 2002) 23.

seem unsatisfactory as with so much of violence in the end, the capacity of the audience to react is drained out and the effect is cathartic. Also the so-called 'happy' ending condones terrorist violence and completely devastates its revolutionary purpose which was not approved by Fo and in the second ending the political purpose the play seems lost and it is made into a mere slapstick or escapist comedy. Fo did not want his play to present a solution to the problem, did not want any catharsis to enable the audience to be purged of the emotion of anger and hatred that the play may have aroused in them. Fo himself experimented with two different endings of the play on two different performances. In the 1970 version, the madman while threatening to blow up the policemen and the journalist, in the end, jumps out of the window. There is a blackout; the sound of an explosion indicates that the Madman is dead. When the lights come up, Miss Feletti questions the police officers about this new 'jump' and they come up with the same old 'raptus' theory. As she goes out, a man with a beard, strongly resembling the madman enters and announces that he is the real examining magistrate. Thus the action comes full circle and the play is thrown open to the audience for discussion. This seems rather a neat and reformist ending because it finally puts the faith in the state run and supported agencies: the judiciary and the media. Fo himself abandoned this trim ending because it had a cathartic effect on the audience; and brought out a second version in 1974 (the one shown in the prescribed text). His drama is essentially social and is located in the materialist world:

The material of *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* could be recast as tragedy, but the conviction behind it is that justice can be implemented, that wrongs can be righted and a purer society brought into being.<sup>40</sup>

Fo's plays are an appeal for action to cure evils of society and end injustice. So he wanted this play to be completed by the audience through political discussion and action which constitutes the third act of his drama. Here Fo plays with the politics of form/formlessness as this play and essentially the whole of his oeuvre, does not subscribe to any literary canon and the classical rules of drama; and become an ensemble dedicated to the people and their culture.

#### **4 The Afterlife of *Accidental Death of An Anarchist***

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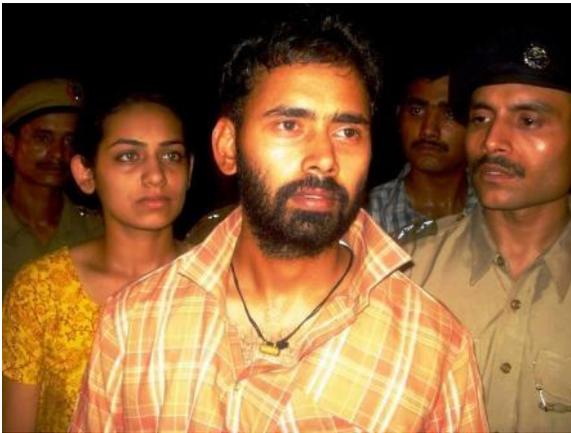
<sup>40</sup> Joseph Farrell's "Fo and Feydeau: Is Farce a Laughing Matter?" *Italica*, 72.3, (1995) 318.

Dario Fo desired that *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* should not be translated but adapted to suit the need of counter culture or revolutionary culture in other provinces. The play is not meant to be a dramatic presentation of Italy in a particular era but can be seen as a theatrical mode to highlight the trans-cultural tribulations. Adaptations of this play in various languages and countries have been engaged in the cultural politics of the contemporary terrain. There have been adaptations of *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* in countries like UK, US, Canada, China, Australia and India. In Fo's work, the artistic form and political message are inextricably linked but it does not always happen in adaptations in different countries and languages. In England alone there were two different adaptations of the play, one was written and staged by Gavin Richards in 1979 and was highly popular. But the production was widely denounced by the critics and Fo himself for its caricaturing of the policemen and insufficient attention to the political connotations of the original. There was another adaptation by Alan Cumming and Tim Supple in 1991 that contains a denunciation of police conduct, much discussed in the press at that time, in the case of the Irish citizens wrongly imprisoned for the bombings in Guildford and Birmingham<sup>41</sup>. Then there is Paula Wing, an actress and playwright whose work has been produced across Canada and internationally, whose adaptation of *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* is based in the Canadian milieu. Wing turned the original themes about oppressive regimes into an angry outburst about the banks. In the Chinese adaptation the Chinese avant-garde theatre director Meng Jinghui focuses on the redefinition of his own understanding of the dramatic medium in terms of simultaneous interplay of avant-garde and popular influences, sociopolitical commitment and playful entertainment. In Meng's hands Fo's masterpiece undoubtedly undergoes a profound metamorphosis. With its powerful ambivalences and multiple layers of meaning his production manages to retain the essence of its source at both structural and semantic level. However, it does not fully fulfill the purpose of counter-information exposing the criminality of the state sponsored agencies. The purpose of Meng's adaptation is more self-referential than politico-satirical. It is the case with many of Meng Jinghui's other productions such as "Bootleg Faust" (based on Goethe's Faust) that has been transported to modern-day China and adapted accordingly. In addition to the new ideas in all of his plays, he employs a lot of techniques like Electronic music, dazzling lighting and innovative stage settings

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<sup>41</sup> Richards' version remains effective piece of theatre because he operated a total conversion of the play, finding in farce and music-hall slapstick an equivalent in British popular culture for the Italian Commedia forms underlying Fo's plays.

that enthrall the audience both mentally and visually. Meng, who is Well-known for integrating contemporary issues into his plays, employs a lot of Beijing dialects in his production of *Accidental Death of An Anarchist*, which makes the play much more vivid with Chinese characteristics. In the Hindi adaptation by Amitabh Srivastava which is titled *Operation Three Star* – directed by Arvind Gaur (performed by Asmita [http://www.google.co.in/imgres?q=Operation+Three+Star+-+directed+by+Arvind+Gaur&um=1&hl=en&client=firefox-a&sa=N&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&tbm=isch&tbnid=UqNKr6aq\\_u5BSM:&imgrefurl=http://indiantheatre.blogspot.com/2009\\_11\\_01\\_archive.html&doci](http://www.google.co.in/imgres?q=Operation+Three+Star+-+directed+by+Arvind+Gaur&um=1&hl=en&client=firefox-a&sa=N&rls=org.mozilla:en-US:official&tbm=isch&tbnid=UqNKr6aq_u5BSM:&imgrefurl=http://indiantheatre.blogspot.com/2009_11_01_archive.html&doci)



Group), the audiences encounter contemporary references to violence and rape by the Indian police including the killing of two innocent businessmen in downtown Delhi. Today when newspaper headlines scream about police atrocities, plays like *Operation Three Star* become a compelling study on the anatomy of violence. Literary adaptations and translations lie at the centre of cross-cultural exchanges

among civilizations through centuries. An adaptation is both a process (of creation and reception) and a product; it also ensures the interminable life for the text. So various adaptations of *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* have only improved the thematic capacity of the original and have provided the theatre geniuses a medium to address and fight the urgent political battles. Adaptations also help in breaking the hierarchy of artistic forms and the Romantic ideology of original genius. With the initiation of adaptations, the capitalist notion of individual authorship cannot hold up in the face of the complex reality of the production of literature today. Rather than being displaced by the adaptation (as is often feared), the literary text most frequently gets a new life in indigenized settings. So Fo's inclination to have more adaptations of *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* than translations, is an urge to challenge the older capitalist models where the canonical texts are 'preserved' through copyrights.

## 5 Summary

This unit focuses on Dario Fo, versatile theatre personality of Italy, who practices an activist theatre which communicates directly with its audience and is based on forms and principles of popular culture and oral traditions. Through his drama, Fo acts as a savage political critic of consumerist society and builds up strategies and tensions to stir up the brain-washed proletariat. Fo's theatrical medium utilizes performance traditions born of the popular heritage in order to bring about a proletarian revolution. Fo takes theatre to people's houses and rural towns and blends Marxist agit-prop with performance techniques drawn from the *commedia dell'arte* and *giullare* tradition. This unit particularly focuses on Fo's play *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* whose theatrical form is rooted in tragedy but thrives on farce – the farce of power. The audience is overwhelmed by the grotesque and absurdly comic performance of the madman. This play is a counter-enquiry into official responsibility for the massacre in Piazza Fontana and also a comment upon the reformist agenda and opportunistic policies of PCI. This unit tries to show how this play is an angered articulation by Fo which is intended to rouse the audience from their stupor and make them realize their state of passivity.

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