

THE THEATRE OF DARIO FO

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DARIO FO'S THEATRE

CHAPTER I

Introduction

Dario Fo was born in San Giano, a small village in Lombardy in 1926. His writing was sparked off by the people who lived around Lake Maggiore. Fishermen and dockworkers who always had a few tales to tell appealed to Fo's attitude towards 'il popolo'. Hence the development of techniques of the 'teatro popolare' were of paramount importance to him as we will see later on. Ordinary peasant life fascinated him and it probably influenced his later works.

His break-up with the company Nuova Scena, which was under the auspices of the A.R.C.I. (the cultural wing of the Italian communist party), provided new places for him to perform. Just like in his youth where every working-class hide-out intrigued him, docks, bars, bowling alleys etc., he found in these a permanent base where he could perform, this time not merely observing the people but participating with them. The reactions of Fo's public was to become the basis of his theatre.

It was while studying architecture in Milan, that his natural components - 'imagination and courage' emerged; it was then that he began to improvise satirical sketches, and his skills in comedy quickly led to involvement in political cabaret shows and to an eighteen week series of comic monologues for radio, which have recently appeared as a recast collection of cartoons illustrated by his son Jacopo.

This transmission called Poer Nano began in 1952 and it marked an important moment for Fo, enabling the listener to closely observe his strategy of invention and communication. He attacks the listener with his passionate polemicizing and shocks him by reversing roles and normal logic, even going as far as turning 'Cain' into a victim and making 'Othello'

an understanding husband. His type of provocation and desire for rebellion gave rise to controversy and skirmishes with the authorities. But in 1952 Poer Nano made its official debut at the Odeon Theatre in Milan, where Fo met Franco Parenti and Giustino Durano. They were soon to become working partners and did so in a show called Cocorico. This did not go down too well with another theatrical company called 'Gobbi' - (Valeri, Bonucci, Coprioli) who labelled themselves as true intellectuals and who Fo considered to be the founders of the 'Teatro Digestivo' = after dinner theatre.

In 1953 Fo's company produces Il dito nell'occhio which breaks away from the traditional performance and makes use of political and social satire, which will be the new grounds on which Fo will fight his battles. In 1954, this same company presents - Sani da legare, developing the theme of Il dito nell'occhio satirifying everyday life in Italy and the 'Legge Truffa'. The script was butchered by 'Scelba's' censorship and its repression provoked a split within the group; Durano returns to the traditional performance, Parenti with difficulty returns to the R.A.I. and Fo begins new experiences with the cinema. He writes and takes part in the film -Lo Svitato story of an ingenuous and slow reporter who goes crazy in Milan.

In 1958-59 Dario Fo and Franca Rame start work on their farces and in 1958 they produce Ladri, manichini e donne nude! But in the same year I tre bravi was performed which was probably the nearest Fo got to writing a farce in the Commedia-dell'arte style concerning himself only with the proletariat.

The period from 1959 to 1967 was Fo's most active and productive period, when he performed a series of self-styled bourgeois comedies.

'Bourgeois', because he played to middle-class audiences in traditional playhouses. The plays of this period included:-

Gli Arcangeli non giocano a flipper (1959-60)

Chi ruba un piede e fortunato in amore (1961-62)

Isabella, tre Caravelle e un Cacciaballe (1963-64)

Settimo ruba un po meno (1965-66)

La Colpa e sempre del diavolo (1965-66) and

La Signora e da buttare (1967-68)

The analysis of these plays enables the reader to understand the basis of the 'reversed perspective'; a technique of Fo which arouses a reaction of irritation and displacement even through the catharsis of their laughter.

'O che il mondo e tanto bello!^{1a}

Se lo guardi appeso per i piedi

Capovolto e agli occhi piu non credi

Se lo guardi a testa in giu . . .'

In fact, this is so in Gli Arcangeli non giocano a flipper (1959). 'Il Lungo' in order to have his identity card corrected, (issued to him by an insane employee) finds himself locked up in a dog's home. The scenic technique becomes surreal and finds dimensions out of the ordinary conventions when he changes character and becomes ring leader, forcing the director and two employees to act like circus animals before his whip.

'Forza, Direttore, Zompa! Sotto che dobbiamo eliminare i^{1b}
favoreggiamenti, le concessioni particolari! Tutti devono avere le

loro frustate! Rispettiamo la legge, uguaglianza per tutti: cani, uomini, gatti e direttori!

Fo quickens the pace of these actions, rapidly moving on, in order to fit in his new inventions, emphasising his tricks, the rhythm of action playing with as many situations as possible, i.e. the change of trousers, the suitcases, the exchange of minister, Angela's false conversations, the false accusation at the beginning at the baker's etc. etc. There is no time to breathe and very little time to perceive his messages.

This group of comedies are outspokenly critical of the Italian government, of imperialism and of the catholic church, and although considered acceptable fare for middle-class theatre goers, Fo's theatre was becoming more and more provocative, leaving no space to what Fo called the 'Teatro Digestivo'. This unleashed a lot of aggression and criticism and at times severe interference of censorship, ruining many of his scripts. This happened in Aveva due pistole con gli occhi bianchi e neri produced in 1961-62 which was a play about a collusion between fascism and the bourgeoisie and between political power and organised crime.

But it wasn't until after La Signora e da buttare season 1968-69, when Fo was arrested for having offended the head of the United States, 'Johnson', that he decided to break off from traditional theatre. Franca Rame says:-

'Si potevano far critiche di ogni genere al nostro teatro, ma bisogna² ammettere che il nostro è un teatro vivo, dove si parlava di "fatti" di cui la gente aveva bisogno di sentir parlare. Per questo, e per il linguaggio da noi usato, il nostro era un teatro popolare.'

Fo's idea of performing for a bourgeois audience, was completely misinterpreted by the bourgeoisie who laughed and appreciated jokes about themselves. He had become the minstrel of a fat and intelligent bourgeoisie. As Franca Rame quoted, they were simply the Provokers of their Ruttino Digestivo.³

Not long after this problematic period, Fo is offered the chance of taking over Italy's most popular programme, Canzonissima in 1962, but one of his sketches about building constructors' speculation at a time of great hardship amongst the working class, especially builders, proved drastic at the time, and Fo once again was reduced to a butchered script from the censors, and it was banned from the series. They decided to abandon their association with Italian radio and television altogether although it may have seemed to be at a strange time, when things were going well. I believe that like Vittorio Gassman, whose recent book has the answer, Fo also felt the same way. Gassman states in this book:-

'Una cosa soprattutto: che la recitazione per il cinema e la non recitazione. Cio che bisogna fare davanti alla macchina da presa e esserci. L'arte dell'attore cinematografico probabilmente e tutta qui.'⁴

So it is quite probable that Fo, (who had so many messages to convey and so many gestures to be seen), had the same views about cinematographic acting as Gassman. For Fo it must be like imprisoning a character who longs to break free from the cage but is prevented from doing so and just dies and withers away. The theatre offers more stimulus and spontaneity, in touch with the real world, which both actors really wanted and proved in their own way, through their immense success, to be so.

It was during 1968-70 that Fo and Rame left the established theatre circuit, setting up a new company called 'Nuova Scena' under the auspices of the 'A.R.C.I.', the cultural wing of the Italian communist party, to tour the non theatre venues, including occupied factories, bowling alleys, workers' social clubs and many others. Fo had now become the Giullare of the working-class and performed for people who had never even been given the chance to prove their knowledge on literature and politics and who gave him so much satisfaction through their active participation. Work during this period included:-

Mistero Buffo (1969)

Legami pure che tanto io spacco tutto lo stesso (1969) and

L'operaio conosce 300 parole, il padrone 1000 per questo lui e il padrone.
(1969)

However the forming of the 'Associazione Nuova Scena' evolved through their belief that this revolutionary action would bring the working class into power. These plays were part of the weapons which would be used to fight their battles. Fo felt that response and reaction in these people was so ardent, that in some respect they even produced his plays allowing him to grasp their messages and slogans and to elaborate on them.

But after a while, criticism of the bureaucracy and of reformism, came to be strongly disapproved of by the Italian communist party, the A.R.C.I., which led to a split in 1970. In that year, an independent, self supporting company - Il Collettivo Teatrale La Comune, was founded by Fo and Rame in Milan, and in spite of evictions, kidnapping, imprisonment and continuous harassment, continued to work and to draw widespread popular support, playing sometimes to six and eight - thousand people. Work in this period included: Vorrei morire anche stasera se dovessi

pensare che non e servito a niente 1970, which is about Palestinian and Italian resistance, Fedayn 1972 - which covers the Palestinian revolution through its culture and through its songs, Morte accidentale di un Anarchico 1970, about the murder of Pinelli, and Tutti Uniti, Tutti Insieme! Ma Scusa, quello non e il padrone 1970 about class war in Italy from 1911-1922. With this Fo wanted to . . .

'Mettere il nostro lavoro al servizio del movimento di classe, ma al⁵ servizio per noi non vuole dire infilarsi nel piatto gia confezionato, ma contribuire al movimento, essere presente, cambiare con esso, con le sue lotte e con le sue reali esigenze.'

For Fo it was important to convey the 'message' to the people and in the Commune all that is thought to get in the way is eliminated, i.e.: there is a total rejection of the theatrical element in favour of the contents, no aesthetic values etc., just the mere offering of a word which could contribute and help progress on the road to revolution.

In the chapters which follow, I shall discuss 3 plays, Gli Arcangeli non giocano a Flipper, Mistero Buffo and Morte Accidentale di un Anarchico, which seem to me the most interesting to emerge from the 3 stages of Fo's theatrical career.

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CHAPTER IIGli Arcangeli non giocano a Flipper

After Dario Fo had left the group Parenti-Durano he started work with his wife Franca Rame on a number of farces in the Commedia dell'arte style. It was in 1959, the start of his most active period as a writer that he wrote Gli Arcangeli non giocano a Flipper. It is a self-styled bourgeois comedy, written both as a farce and as a traditional three act play. It embodies a series of gags which become pretexts for new digressions and sketches, with hardly any linear construction. The fragmentary unity of time, place and action are juxtaposed by the protagonist; Il Lungo who acts as a guide throughout the play. He is the giullare of friends endowed with the basso tasso di criminalita¹, which suits him well seeing that they pay his way through life.

These friends organise a marriage for him, to a prostitute called Angela. She discovers that Il Lungo is in reality, the Rigoletto of the poor and falls in love with him. He doesn't know this, so he goes to Rome to withdraw his pension as he is a disabled ex-serviceman, only to find that a crazy bureaucrat has registered him as a hound dog. In the dog pound in which he is kept for three days, (necessary procedure in order to regain his pension and identity) he is saved by a mad dog trainer. But he soon leaves him and finds himself on a train, where he steals a minister's pair of trousers and his identity. When he steps off the train, he is welcomed as an honourable guest and made to preside over a ceremony where he distributes medals and finds Angela. He is then caught up by the true minister, but quickly escapes with Angela. Il Lungo wakes up from his dream just before the wedding scene and the story is repeated, but this time with great suspense because Angela is masked as an ugly puppet. Certain that the archangels have double-bluffed him, he is torn with

distress, until Angela removes the mask and il Lungo exclaims that archangels don't play pinball.

The title, Gli Arcangeli non giocano a Flipper is a wonderfully enigmatic metaphor which sets the tone immediately. It evokes incongruity, ambiguity, humour, wit and above all the writer's own attitude to his subject and to his audience. It remains a mystery until the end of the play where Fo intends to place his climax. Therefore I will return to this later.

Fo's use of language is not as important to him as is his mime. Although his diction is simple and colloquial, it embodies highly visual elements. It can be said that the language he uses is there merely to dress his physical gags in contrast with the banale jokes which reverse and surrealise the actual sense of the play with constant changes from the figurative and literal to the physical gestures which complement the actual chain movement of the language.

Fo's choice of words matches situations and characters beautifully and it is through this that he satirizes society; e.g.:- When il Lungo goes to the registry office, the rhythm of the action speeds up immensely and so too does the language. Fo treats this scene in act II as a circus. It is a very serious matter and yet Fo turns to the absurd to emphasise that life really is like this and what better way to show it than by laughing at it; e.g. in order to obtain the clerk's attention, il Lungo shows them a fake bomb and like a magician about to perform a trick he says:-

'Prego osservare; modello dirompente 38.'²

This type of language is kept up for a while:-

'Avanti, pescami la mia scheda, nome Tempo Sereno Nuvolo Agitato e a chi ride gli arriva una bombata sul naso!' (L'impiegato alla

maniera dei papagalli, servendosi dei denti, pesca un cartoncino e lo porge).³

Alla pesca della fortuna! Chi pesca bene, chi pesca male! Via bravo!
Hai pescato proprio bene . . .⁴

Through this, the spectator recognises the beginning of Fo's social satire. Here it is a dig at the Italian system behind any organisation. No-one really knows what's happening and as il Lungo says above; it is not how good you are which ensures you of a job, but it is the amount of luck you have.

The impudent tone is taken even further when Fo openly attacks the use of the polite form (which in Italy is a very delicate subject as it is still regarded as an important means of ranking people and their positions in life).

- Lungo: Beh commissario, sai cosa ti dico? Mi sei simpatico!⁵
- Brigadiere: Sfacciato! Come ti permetti di dargli del tu!
- Lungo: E lui come si permette di dare del tu a me? C'e qualche articolo del codice penale e civile che dice che un commissario puo dare del tu ai cittadini e i cittadini incece no?
- Lungo: Preferirei mi desse del voi, sa il lei e un po femminile.

This is a very comical portrayal of society and il Lungo treats the whole thing as a joke because fundamentally speaking it is. When he says that lei is a bit too feminine, he is really discharging the whole matter as being ludicrously useless. However the serious undertone is that the police in Italy worship their rank in society and strongly adhere to their

power. Fo exposes their ignorance and plays on it. At the same time, by joking about the use of tu, lei and voi, he is shouting out for equality. He is after all the giullare of the popolo.

The fact that il Lungo is a invalid ex-serviceman provides yet another scene for Fo to enlarge on the customs and systems behind Italian politics. So far il Lungo has been tied to a chair, handcuffed and slapped several times. Now that he has declared his handicap, the police are worried of jeopardizing their career. With his comic sarcasm, il Lungo, verbally blackmails them:-

'Ma tu guarda la vita! Uno si fa in quattro per far carriera e un bel⁶ giorno, per una stupidaggine, trac; va tutto all'aria! Tutto per sto viziaccio di menar le mani. Brutte manacce cattive. (Il Brigadiere vorrebbe reagire, ma il Lungo lo blocca) "Eh . . . eh mutilato!"

At the end of act II, scene 4, there is a brilliant play on words which is a direct dig at the Italian government. The situation is ironic. The mayor has just discovered that there are two ministers and attacks the true one with:-

'Hai finito di fare il ministro cocco bello!"

Ministro: Ho finito di fare il ministro? Ma che dice? Accidenti. E caduto un'altra volta il governo!"

So much so for Italy which is renowned for its frequent changes of government. But this type of situation is a true balance and contrast of thought and phrasing, brillinately depicting each Italian's true fear; loss of position and loss of government.

The public is also depicted as blind to faults where people of a high rank are concerned. Fo wants to get the message across, that they too are human, we are all the same, so why must they be judged as infallible. He ironizes this through Act II where il Lungo acts as minister. He doesn't know what he is doing, but is practically worshipped by the mayor for his astounding sense of humour.

Sindaco: "Oh, ma come, signor ministro: La posa della prima⁸
pietra per la nostra nuova scuola!

Lungo: Ah, si: La scuola della pietra.

Sindaco: (ridacchia servile) Suo marito ha sempre voglia di scherzare."

Had a normal citizen been in his position, he probably would have undergone a very embarrassing and condescending sermon from the mayor. But who would dare say anything to the Minister?

Act I immediately begins with a very active and colourful scene. Il Lungo has just been dragged into a cake-shop in the disguise of a dying man:-

Pasticciere: "E me lo portate a crepare in negozio, in mezzo ai miei⁹
pasticcini."

There is a lot of confusion. Il Lungo is lying on the counter of the shop, a doctor is called (one of the balordi) and asks for a chair, to which all the gang reply, passing each other the chair only to return it to its former place. The diagnosis reveals that the cause of the illness is a poisonous 'bigne' bought in that very cake-shop. They succeed in blackmailing the

baker and leave taking numerous cakes with them, (supposedly for analysis).

- Quarto: "C'entrano, c'entrano. Le torte c'entrano sempre!"¹⁰
 (Carica il tutto sulla pancia del Lungo trasformato in portantina.)
- Secondo: "Lei non ha idea di quanta roba ci vuole per un'analisi.
 Arrivederci!"

The rhythm of the whole of the first scene is incredibly fast. A simple joke has sparked off a series of events in a machine-like manner. After the scene in the cake-shop, the gang run out satisfied with their day's work until they see the baker running after them. They think he has seen through them, whilst all he wants is not to die alone as he has just absent-mindedly eaten one of his own bigne. The gang therefore wallop il Lungo on the head and run, he falls and action picks up again with the second prank, when il Lungo is woken up and married to a prostitute called Angela. This is important because it is the point where the dream begins.

This type of 'no time to breathe' movement is so vivid that it could be seen and interpreted without any dialogue. It is a chain movement where one thing is linked with another evoking a feeling of exasperation yet suspense because the chain cannot be broken. Fo's idea of action was most probably influenced by the techniques used in the silent movies where one prank followed the other with an ending which usually brought the whole situation back to the beginning of the movie or brought it to a happy end. Charlie Chaplin and Laurel and Hardy are examples of this type of action which Fo uses over and over again.

Although there is little linear pattern in this play, the rhythm of events and dialogue are kept on the same level. The language used at the registry office has the distinct atmosphere of a circus and yet at the same time, has the action of the silent movies:- Il Lungo grabs the stamps which are attached to the necks of the employees by a big elastic, pulls them, they recoil and stamp them on the forehead, then he grabs the handle of the trapdoor and just as if it was a big machine, each head ducks down to stamp the certificates in front of them.

This scene emphasises the point that Fo is trying to make, which is that unless people are forced to co-operate within this type of system, then they never will as he showed when all the windows in the office were shut in front of him. The fact that the employees are stamped on the forehead only to act as a machine, could well indicate an attack on machine-life or it might be a pun on the Italian saying:-

'Ce lo devo aver scritto in fronte',

alluding to ignorance which il Lungo no longer possesses.

A wonderfully visual scene, which could be seen as an example of Fo's great love and skill for mime is when il Lungo is questioned by the police in the registry office. While the inquisition is going on, he rolls up a ball of imaginary wool. The commissario is also taken in by this and throws it away, irritated. The Brigadiere then collects it and puts it in his pocket. This type of mime was common to the great mimic - 'Marcel-Marceau' and Fo, I believe has taken after him in many respects.

The image that evolves from this, is that the police are not that clever and are taken in by fools such as il Lungo. This is done very subtly and yet has a very striking effect.

The Brigadiere directing the traffic in the registry office is another well known technique for evoking a sense of confusion and this is done not only for the sake of action but as an allegorisation of the confusion within the ministry.

Scene 4 is the height of comic action. It moves in a chain reaction and terminates with a very touching, dramatic speech from il Lungo which slows down the pace but very quickly picks up through yet another prank. It begins with il Lungo in a first class compartment on a train. Still camouflaged as a dog, he spots a pair of trousers on a luggage rack and goes to the toilet to put them on. Having spotted the ticket collector, he runs back into the toilet and locks himself in. He is left with the handle in his hand, the door is jammed. In the meantime the minister is looking for his trousers, he spots the ticket collector and demands to have his. This is done and while the minister is stuck in the toilet, il Lungo steps off mistaken for the true minister and is made to attend the ceremony. Back in the train, the minister is jammed in the toilet, trouserless and the ticket-collector is left trouserless too as the guides to the minister, (il Lungo) had gone in the compartment to fetch his luggage. So far il Lungo has managed to get out of one sticky situation and straight into another very meticulously. This is common to all of Fo's characters who from ignorance turn lucid. There is an element of suspense in this scene, but Fo's characters are so unpredictable that one is forever asking what's coming next. For example, when il Lungo steps off the train, and the police come to meet him, both he and the spectator assume it's to arrest him, instead they welcome him and the station-master in the meantime explains that the true minister is already off the train, which provides a very comical scene between the ticket collector and the true minister,

(thought an imposter) locked in the toilet. Hence the brilliant play on words:-

- 'Hai finito di fare il ministro, cocco bello!¹¹

- 'Ho finito di fare il ministro? Ma che dice? Accidenti. E caduto un'altra volta il governo?'

Scene after scene is crammed with action. The spectator has to be alert, he has to follow each move in order to fully comprehend what's going on. This is a technique which Fo uses to interest and amuse his public. In fact, no sooner has Il Lungo stepped off the train, than he immediately takes part in yet another action packed event. He is now the minister, has acquired a wife on the way, which was a surprise because it was Angela, and has to undergo a ceremony of which he knows nothing about. So as a true giullare del popolo, he practises his tricks on them. (The bourgeois are always amused by giullari who take off their society). At least this is what Fo leads us to believe. Il Lungo starts another little scene by acting as a magician. He is handed a pair of scissors on a cushion and to test their sharpness, snips a feather off an old lady's hat, then commences his trick. He cuts the presentation ribbon into lots of little pieces, places them in a container and pulls out many small Italian flags.

This is not merely Fo, amusing himself, but also a dig at society's customs. He ridicules them by making them laugh at themselves. This is the true characteristics of a 'giullare'.

Sindaco: Un ministro prestigiatore non me lo sarei mai aspettato!¹²

Lungo: Beh, le diro nel nostro ambiente c'e da aspettarsi di tutto: ci sono quelli che fanno i salti mortali, quelli che si arrampicano sui vetri, i trasformisti, i tiratori scelti, i prestigiatori sono i piu comuni, piu o meno lo sanno fare tutti.'

His act finishes and we are now in the hotel where both il Lungo, the minister and the 'shared' Angela are staying. There is a sequence of movement here which enables Angela to flee with il Lungo who has been donated a large sum of money (ironically) for the founding of a statue called 'man's Best Friend', hence the dog, hence il Lungo who is un cane bracco leaving the minister still trouserless, when suddenly out of the blue, the trousers borrowed by the minister from the mayor are quickly taken by the ticket collector who makes a quick entrance and quick exit.

This brings us back to act I, with a flashback to il Lungo's dream. This is where the climax of the play evolves, where il Lungo's dream seems to have an unhappy ending and then ends in exactly the opposite way with his beloved Angela.

The whole play seems to be plagued by double-bluffs. The bluffing at the cake-shop, the wedding scene, the ignorance of il Lungo turned to wit and lucidity, his career as a minister and the double bluffing of the archangels.

Gli Arcangeli non giocano a flipper, is a means for Fo to comment on society and its hangups. The play is impregnated with humour, wit and action, but nevertheless maintains a serious undertone. The dog can be seen as parallel to society. Man is trapped by powers above him, power that shouldn't exist between one man and another. When in the dog pound, il Lungo calls on the other dogs for help:-

'Organizziamo un'evasione . . . Ma tu guarda se si Muovono, sti¹³
 bastardi! Allora sapete cosa vi dico: che mi fate schifo, e che vi sta
 bene, perche quando uno lascia che gli mozzino l'orecchio, la coda e
 gli schiacciano il naso senza manco tirare un moccio, allora e
 giusto che finisca in camera a gas!'

His tone here is bitter and serious. He is a revolutionary and its a
 revolution he wants, so what better way to do it, than to preach about it.

Fo's digs and attacks against the wealthy and powerful directors in
 life are found in abundance and in this play, he has no end of fun in
 making them take their own medicine:-

'Forza direttore! Zompa! Sotto, che dobbiamo eliminare i¹⁴
 favoreggiamenti, le concessioni particolari! Tutti devono avere le
 loro frustate! Rispettiamo la legge, uguaglianza per tutti cani,
 uomini, gatti e direttori.'

Fo's attack on religion is mild in this play, we only see it in the form of an
 orthodox ritual which involves carrying the priest instead of the bride and
 letting the bride sleep with the husband's friends first. This is an absolute
 mockery of religious traditions which again evokes Fo's own feelings
 towards the church.

This play is a concise satire on society and its customs which is what
 il Lungo - 'il giullare' is paid to do. He cannot offend because he is
 making people laugh at themselves, therefore establishing in the bourgeois
 mind an elevated view of themselves, but also a compassionate attitude
 towards their fellow men.

The grandest metaphor in the play is the actual title: Gli Arcangeli non giocano a Flipper. One may well ask where it fits in. This is the actual climax of the play, when il Lungo finds that the trick played on him even after his dream, is not true.

Angela is masked as an ugly puppet and il Lungo in distress rebukes the arcangels:

'Ma prima di tutto ce l'ho con chi organizza i sogni io vorrei¹⁵
proprio sapere chi e che ha sto incarico . . . Gabriele, Michele? . . .
Raffaele? Chi e?'

'Ma andiamo, pure i sogni col doppio gioco.'

This reversed perspective shocks the spectator, who now accustomed to il Lungo's lucidity and luck, cannot perceive such an ending. But it is through this anti-climax that the other climax emerges and it does so with great rapidity. Il Lungo's speech is filled with pathos and it culminates when in exasperation he further explains the title:-

'Ma Porcogiuda, mi avete preso tutti per un flipper che basta¹⁶
metterci dentro cento Lire, lo fai scattare e puoi sfogarti a
sbatterlo, scrollarlo finche ti pare.'

However his state of mind changes quickly when Angela displays her true-self.

'In fondo dovevo immaginarmelo che voi non centravate con gli¹⁷
scherzi . . . ma dico un arcangelo che sfolte . . . Io l'ho sempre
saputo che voi a flipper non ci giocate.'

'Ammazzalo che bei sogni che organizzate, arcangeli! Meglio che gli americani.'

Fo doesn't miss his chance to have a dig at the American movies which always have a happy ending and by so doing ends his play.

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CHAPTER III

Mistero Buffo

Mistero Buffo was performed for the first time in 1969 in Sestri Levante by Dario Fo and his company Nuova Scena. It was during this time, 1968-69 that various polemics erupted amongst the working-class and students on the pressure of class-struggle which also began to shed light on the cultural world. Hence it was the right time for Fo and his wife to abandon the traditional theatre for a more provocative type of performance. This began with the Company Nuova Scena which had close links with the Italian communist party. The main aim was to emphasise class-struggle. The difference was essentially to be performing with a worker-peasant audience rather than performing for a bourgeois public and to establish politics and their function in the plays. But Fo's political views became more extreme and he came to be strongly criticised by the communist party and by the trade unions. This led to a break up with Nuova Scena and between 1969-70 Dario Fo and Franca Rame establish il collettivo teatrale "La Comune".

The aim of La Comune was to continuously modify the script in accordance to contemporary political events, giving rise to a need for debates after each performance which Fo does readily in order to defend his political views and to explain the actual importance of the play.

But 'Mistero Buffo' still belongs to the 'Nuova Scena' period even if it was later modified. It is a collage of medieval texts, some of which are original but others invented by Fo himself. These texts are presented and interpreted on the stage by the 'Giullare'. In this play, Fo digs deeply into the origins of popular culture. The 'giullare' is born from the people. He takes the anger from them and returns it through the grotesque form so that the people may become conscious of their conditions.

Fo places Ciullo d'Aclamo's 'Rosa Fresca Aulentissima' at the beginning of 'Mistero Buffo'. Ciullo and his poem stand for popular culture which had been distorted and appropriated by high culture. Fo wants his working class audiences to think: 'maybe we do have a culture, if so, why is it suppressed? How do we learn about it? This immediately sets the tone which Fo will use throughout the text. A feeling of rebellion. In Mistero Buffo, Fo uses a strange concoction of techniques which derive from the theatrical world of time immemorial, from Plautus to the Commedia dell'arte.

The gramelot is said to have derived from Scapino many centuries before the comedia dell'arte. It is entirely an invented language used by actors in order to escape censorship. But the most important reason for the use of the gramelot was the refusal to accept the domineering power of the language used by the aristocrats. They had always invented languages to induce their power on the lower class who didn't know how to read or write. This was why the giullare was so important to them; he was 'il giornale parlato.'

In fact by adopting this new language, everyone would be on the same level and social struggle would decrease. But the peasants knew that Fo was on their side and treated this imaginary language as a reason for rebellion against the upper-class. The dialect used in 'Mistero Buffo' is a clear sign of this. In Lauda dei Battuti there is a wonderful example of Fo's use of dialect as a comic technique. A young girl has decided to make love to her young man but she gets cold feet and says:-

'Non mi toccar a mi, che mi a son zovina, son fiola,¹
tosa son e garsonetta.'

She is merely saying 'I'm young I am, I'm young, I'm young, I'm young', in different dialects. This shows how entertaining yet how important it was, seeing that only the 'popolino' could fully understand it.

Mistero Buffo is recited by a 'giullare' in a dialect which extends throughout the Po Valley. The minstrel is the symbol of the people. He speaks on their behalf and acts out their conditions. Fo's idea of the medieval 'giullare' works beautifully even today. The past is not something dead but something to be continuously explored, as Gramsci once said, (here put in Fo's own words)

'Se non conosci da dove vieni, non sai dove andare'²

Even if today the medieval minstrel is extinct, his spirit carries on. Fo himself states:-

'Se uno non sa della propria origine, del proprio mondo, del proprio³ muoversi, che cosa significa essere umano, il significato della cultura e finito.'

Fo can't stress enough the importance for the working class of finding out why class-conflicts are imminent, why the working class has always been oppressed and why nothing has been done about it.

La nascita del giullare was taken from a text found in a library in Ragusa. It dates back to 800 and is of Sicilian origin, although fragments of it have also been found around Brescia and Mantova. The 'giullare' is a cry for social justice. He is the hero who has already undergone the cruel antics of the overpowering boss and is now in a position to fight back. Fo presents us with a typical Medieval scene; a feudal Lord with his peasant-worker. The worker discovers some land, it doesn't belong to anyone so he

cultivates it, the Lord notices this and claims the land but the worker will not submit. The Lord then proceeds to possess his wife in front of him and his children. He is just about to kill his Lord when his wife stops him:-

'Ca ti no t'hait onore, ti set povero, set contadin, vilan,⁴
non puoi pensar dignitat, onore, quela e roba par quei che
↑un sciuri! ai nobili.'

After this very tragic event, his wife and children die. He decides to hang himself when Christ taps him on the shoulder and asks him for a drink. Fo resumes a comical tone, a pick up of a new situation.

- "Me daj un po de bevar?"⁵

- "Ma te par el mument de vengni a demanda de bevar a vün
che fa l'impicatt, boja."

Fo establishes a type of dialogue which would be normal with two peasants but somehow this Christ-figure makes a mockery of everything. Things like:-

"Ul vardi e'l gaveva una facia de pover Crist anca lü,"

are phrases which are used often when describing someone, but Fo uses it here at face value which makes it even more ridiculous.

"Ti sai chi son me?"⁶

"No! ma g'ho avüt un dübi che ti te set Jesus Cristo."

- "Bon! t'e induinat. Quest l'e Pietro e'l Marco l'e quel la."

- "Piazer."

The politics in Fo merge at the very end where Christ tells the peasant that he is only too right not to want a boss, that he was right to hold on to his land but he lacks in one thing according to this marxist type-Christ. He lacks an ardent tongue, which is the only way to stand out amongst men. Christ takes on a reversed-role and says:-

"Ti devi schisciare sti padrun, e i preveti."

Fo puts these words into Christ's mouth to steer people away from the church, for it too is a great power which loves oppressing the oppressed forcing them into a dumb standstill.

Christ then kisses him on the mouth and voila, il giullare is born. The man is instantly filled with courage, with provocative words and with a rebellious spirit. The harsh slogan at the end shows how ignorant and blindly oppressed the people are, blaming their misfortune on Christ, until they are shown differently:-

'E'l rubar che pregne e i legi sui libri che son⁷
lor . . .parlare, parlare. Ehi gente! Ol padron
se va a schisciare schisciare! o l'e de schisciare!

The repetitive sounds here are strongly onomatopoeic and establish the harshness with which il giullare will treat the upper-class.

On similar lines, Fo professes by paraphrasing Mao Tse-Tung's words, that:-

'È il popolo che crea la storia, ma è il padrone che⁸
la racconta.'

Fo wants his public to see life through the giullare's eyes, he wants them to enter into his spirit in order to recognise themselves their environment and the conditions in which they live.

The grotesque is the main aspect in La nascita del villano. It is absurd that Christ should come from out of the top of his head, like a crazy magician engender the birth of the 'villano' through an ass's behind just because Adam would not forsake another rib. The whole situation is one grand hyperbole which Fo intended in order to stress that the villano (unlike the giullare who was not born into his career) was born in pitiful conditions and in pitiful conditions he will continue to live. Even hail, thunder and the heavens open up on him as soon as he is born which Fo uses as a prediction of his life to come.

Through his highly visual and comic miming Fo resumes a type of clownesque comedy, still however stressing the injustice of the boss-worker relationship:-

'Braghe spaccate nel mezzo e slacciate . . .⁹
che non debba perdere tempo nel pisciare.'

In fact this may seem far fetched but there are true facts in factories where workers are timed when in the toilet.

The description given by the angel is an analogy of an animal and Fo continues to satirize all the way through in order to fill his public with pathos, revenge and a true motive for which to fight. There are elements

of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. But sacrifice for whom, for mankind? No, for the boss. Fo at this point is crying out for justice:

'Di luglio e d'agosto,¹⁰
col caldo che ti manda arrosto,
per fargli passar la sete, dagli da bere del aceto.'

The end, instead, is a controversial aspect of the description which embodies the whole quest of religion and its mysteries:

'E come potrebbe avere anima questo villano¹¹
becco (cornuto) se e venuto fuori da un asino con
una scorreggia.'

If God created him in this way, then surely he did it for a purpose; that of pulling down the powerful. Whose side is he on? If we look at one of the Beatitudes, doesn't one of them say: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for they shall inherit the kingdom of heaven" and furthermore God also said that it will be easier for a camel to enter the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the gates of heaven. Therefore the birth of the villano is justified. But Fo is against this. Everyone should be equal on earth and what happens to them after life (as he puts it) is their business.

La Resurrezione di Lazzaro

The raising of Lazarus takes place in a cemetery in Pisa. It dates back to the Quattrocento. The theme of this text is the satirical presentation of the mystical miracles. Christ becomes a type of magician who envelops his public in a cloak of obscure religious rituals i.e.: miracles, which the public love for their morbidity,

hence reverting to the spectacles put on in medieval times especially for the proletariat who only enjoyed them if they were grotesque, morbid and mysterious.

Fo's ridiculing of the situation takes the whole theme of the miracle out of its context: i.e. the cemetery becomes a theatre, circus, market, where people pay to see such a performance. Little phrases like:-

'Non si puo aspettare sempre i miracoli no?'¹²

are very dubious. This is a self ascertainment which in reality manifests incredulity. The undertone is that they've really always done without miracles so why start believing in them now.

Fo reduces everything to a populist level, even the miracle which is supposed to be the highest spiritual form in religion is reduced to a plebeian circus performance with the entrance fee, the hiring of chairs, the betting on whether the miracle will work or not and the selling of sardelle 'che fan resuscitare i morti.

Fo improvises a lot in this particular performance. On one occasion when entering the cemetery, a woman asked if she had to pay, to which the answer was:-

'Si che si paga, davanti alla morte siamo tutti uguali.'¹³

This is not written in the text.

One man then proceeded to tell the cemetery attendant that if he didn't light the candles, it would be so dark that Christ might raise the wrong body. In which case they would have to kill him again and perform the miracle right from the beginning.

The end lines are a harsh depiction of Christ on the cross. The two voices which should sound simultaneously, sound alternatively because it is only Fo who performs.

'Bravo Jesus'¹⁴

Lader

Jesus bravo! Jesus bravo! . . . Lader.'

As Fo performs this all on his own, he also plays the part of the mass, in this case a morbid, religious public, but in Fo's mind a morbid, political public.

The reversed role of Christ is once again present in Le nozze di Cana. He takes on the form of Bacchus and encourages people to drink. He preaches the opposite to the Bible by telling the people not to wait for paradise, but to grab what you can while you can. Fo uses the figure of Christ as a means of communicating to the people, he uses him as a vehicle of his own ideas.

On the one hand there is a harsh polemicising through God and on the other the highly comic commedia-dell'arte scene between the angel and the drunk. The angel is portrayed as an elegant figure, who speaks in an elegant aristocratic Venetian, the drunk is base and speaks in a rough country dialect. The drunk is impatient to tell the angel about his drinking session and to stop him from going on he continuously pinches feathers from his wings, the angel is not amused and kicks him out. This contrast in character highlights the genuineness of the drunk belonging to the proletariat and the aspiring well-to-do angel who conjures up no sympathy at all.

The idea of the wine is analogous to the temptation by the apple and the wedding-feast to an idealistic paradise, like a would-be ideal society.

The giullarata del cieco e dello storpio is the height of the worker-boss situation. When Christ passes them after they have found the physical solution to their problem, the blind man and the disabled find

that they do not want to be cured. They would rather stay like that than work under a boss fully cured. Dignity for them is not having a boss.

After Christ has worked his miracle, the two find themselves involuntarily healed. The blind man is so astounded at his ability to see that Fo says for him or through him:-

Non ha dignit  quello che sta giovane con la possibilit ¹⁵
di vivere tranquillo, senza problemi, no dignitoso e quello
che anche con gli altri e per gli altri lotta per migliorare
insieme le situazioni.'

Hence another lesson to be learnt from yet another parable.

Bonifacio VIII is a brilliant exposition of social injustice, which in this case is revenged by the true figure of Christ. It is the first text in which the all powerful figure is degraded and kicked in the teeth by his own ego, and literally kicked by Christ:-

'Oh se lo sapesse tuo padre . . . disgraziato'¹⁶

The image of Bonifacio is one of a true character of the commedia dell'arte. A true hypocrite, nearly identical to Moliere's 'Tartuffe'.

In this text one gathers a lot of insight into medieval times. The first peasant revolts were sparked off by Fra Segalello da Parma who provoked the peasants with his satirical questions on the rightful ownership of the land. Communist tendencies can already, at such an early stage, be seen in Fra Segalello's own words:-

'La terra e di chi la lavora.'

He was duly killed and Fra Dolcino took over and reacted in the same way until the workers took heed and fought together against the landowners. They called each other communitardi very similar to Comunisti. They shared out their goods according to each person's needs, in a true Marxist fashion. Fo still politicises on the need for equality, not only in a worker-boss situation, but also between the clergy. He shows the church to be a bunch of hypocrites who leave no scope for a person to act in his own rights, under such power unless strongly united as a mass.

The continual singing of the pope is a true mockery of the clergy but at the same time one can't help but feel that in many ways Fo is right to expose certain wrong aspects of the church.

Mistero Buffo is a mixture of various elements, such elements derive from most of his plays. Il Dito nell'occhio was a presentation of a world seen upside down, Comica Finale was an extract from scripts of a wandering crowd of bad actors, most of the themes rely on ingenious maltreated fools turned lucid and in Grande Pantomima con bandiere e pupazzi piccoli e medi, the captions suggest the use of masks in the commedia dell'arte style. An amalgamation of all of these aspects can be seen in Mistero Buffo, interpreted by just one person. Fo performs Mistero Buffo on a bare platform plainly dressed just like the giullari of medieval times.

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CHAPTER IV

Accidental Death of an Anarchist

In 1969 a bomb blew up a bank in Milan, and more than 16 people were killed. Everybody blamed the anarchists. The police arrested a man and took him to the police station. While they were asking him questions in an office on the fourth floor, he fell out of a window and was killed. The police said he jumped and killed himself - suicide! But the official court enquiry said it was 'accidental death'. So nobody really knows how he died. Did he jump or did the police push him?

When interviewed on television, Superintendent Guida, professed that by dying in questo modo precipitoso, the railway-worker Pinelli has confessed to his guilt. It seemed a very easy way out for Superintendent Guida, (who just by the way) had been a fascist warder in his time in Ventotene. In December 1969, in Piazza Duomo, the funerals of the victims took place. A few days earlier, there had been student and worker demonstrations and communist processions of red flags. They wanted to win Valpreda's freedom, and to show the people who the guilty ones really were. Morte Accidentale di un Anarchico aims for this too.

This play which is a grotesque farce of a tragic farce, was shown for the first time in Milan in December 1970. It was performed in a warehouse in Via Colletta in an old factory which was turned into a type of theatre. This belongs and is managed by 'il Circolo la comune'. They propose the creation of a 'circuito culturale alternativo' of the revolutionary left-wing, a distinct alternative to the bourgeoisie. This period proved for Fo to be the strongest politically yet. Their views were of a more advanced and more active nature, their plays more provocative.

Scene I

The play starts upstairs on the second floor of the police station. Inspector Bertozzo and a policeman have to question a man referred to as Il Matto. He has been arrested for impersonation, pretending to be a psychiatrist. Il Matto is a very clever man and he totally confuses the police and in the end they throw him out. The policemen leave the office but Il Matto comes back because he has forgotten his carrier bags. Because the policemen have gone, he starts to look through the drawers and files and finds the one about the anarchist's death. When he answers the phone, he finds out a judge is coming to question the police about how the anarchist died. Il Matto decides to pretend to be the judge. The police come back and il Matto leaves.

Scene II

The police are back in the office and il Matto comes back dressed completely differently, wearing inspector Bertozzo's coat and hat. He tells the police he is the judge. The police and il Matto talk about what happened when the anarchist fell out of the window. The police are very worried that il Matto will find out they killed the anarchist, but il Matto pretends to help them and together they make up new stories. The scene ends with them singing.

Act II

Il Matto is still pretending to be the judge and he tricks the police, forcing them to say that they pushed the anarchist out of the window. A woman newspaper reporter arrives. The police are worried she'll find out the truth and they don't want her to see the judge. Il Matto says he'll help them and pretends to be somebody else. He leaves the stage and comes back pretending to be a professor. The newspaper reporter then starts asking questions. A policeman brings on a model of the bomb which blew

up the bank. One of the policemen recognises il Matto and they realise they've all been tricked. The real judge then appears, much to everyone's disbelief and it is as if the play is about to begin again.

Fo's protagonist in this play is analogous to Pinelli, but in order to provide lines for a farce, he makes use of an absurd made up character called il Matto = the maniac. Through this man's lunacy, Fo is able to say all he wants without fear of being condemned by the authorities. After all he is mad and it is a farce! The place and situation are the same as that of the incident.

But who is this person who can so easily pin down the police and its system? He is a madman, a petit-bourgeois, ex art teacher, who has lived most of his life in asylums, where he has gained most of his experience on mankind. Thus there is an allusion that mankind belongs in asylums and maybe there lies an unknown world of truth in these places. It is in Fo's nature to have his protagonists, naive turned lucid and ingenuous and malicious at the same time, whose tongue (like that of the giullare in Mistero Buffo) is the only powerful implement they own, in order to fight their battles or provoke disasters as in this case.

As we will see later on, it is only through the carnevalesque and grotesque atmosphere in this play that Fo can so closely relate with the Pinelli case, almost turning it into a pantomime. Il Matto's continuous masking, his irresponsibility, his unpredictability are all clear evidence of this.

Il Matto is seen very much as a peasant-hero. He is fighting a battle on his own but never forgets to call upon the public for help and appraisal. He stimulates and provokes the public. His task is to accumulate proof in order to reach an affirmation of class. His major relationship with the public emerges when he confesses his illness:-

'Istriomania . . . ho l'hobby di recitare parti insomma,¹
 sempre diverse. Soltanto che io sono per il teatro
 verita, quindi ho bisogno che la mia compagnia di
 teatranti sia composta di gente vera.'

An illness which in reality is somewhat of an advantage. An advantage because Fo knows that his public understands the true value of these different characters which are so readily played by il Matto. Each role played by him recycles the various roles of power, parodizing and debasing it. He does this very simply by putting on certain clothes and discarding them as each of his characters come to an end.

Il Matto's first impersonation is that of a psychiatrist brought to the police-station for being an imposter. The real parody of the matter lies in his answer on why he charged his client twenty thousand lire:-

Commissario: Ah, per il suo bene? Fa parte della terapia?

Indiziato: Sicuro . . . se non gli carabinavo le ventimila, lei²
 crede che quel poveraccio e soprattutto i suoi familiari
 sarebbero stati soddisfatti? Se gli avessi chiesto
 cinquemila avrebbero immancabilmente pensato:
 "Dev'essere uno che vale poco: forse non e un vero
 professore, sara uno appena laureato, un principiante."
 Invece cosi dopo la sparata gli e mancato il fiato e hanno
 pensato; ma chi e questo?
 Il Padreterno? . . . sono andati via felici come una pasqua
 . . . mi hanno baciato perfino la mano . . . grazie
 professore . . . e piangevano di commozione.

Commissario: Per la miseria, come la sai raccontare bene . . .³

Indiziato: Ma non sono frottole commissario . . . perfino
 Freud dice . . . la parcella salata e il piu
 efficace dei toccasana tanto per il medico che
 per l'ammalato!

This is a manifestation of how society is trained to accept the standard way of life, the expectations and customs. Through il Matto, Fo is able to ridicule it and stress the importance of rejecting the set values.

The second character is the chief councillor of the supreme court of appeal. Il Matto is in the office on his own. He answers the phone and discovers that a judge is to arrive for an inquisition on the Pinelli case. He decides to become this personage and after having passed himself off as the 'commissario Anghiari' and blown a few raspberries down the phone and acted very rudely, he puts on Inspector Bertozzo's coat and hat and is ready to go. Fo makes use of this character in various different ways. Firstly he alludes regularly to vital facts in the Pinelli case through ridiculous circumstances.

Matto: "Ha ragione (si toglie il cappello con studiata lentezza)⁴
 Ma, mi creda non lo tenevo in capo per villania . . .
 e solo per quella finestra spalancata, soffro le
 correnti d'aria . . . spece alla testa. Lei no?
 Senta non si potrebbe chiuderla?"

Fo is very subtle with this prefiguration of what is going to happen, but as his enquiry moves on, so he becomes less subtle and outright condemning. From this quite important allusion, il Matto proceeds by attacking the petite bourgeoisie and their use of titles:-

Matto: "Gia . . . gia . . . libero docente all'universita⁵
di Roma. Sono due i 'gia' e dopo il secondo 'gia'
c'e la virgola, come sempre."

Camouflaged as chief councillor, il Matto gains an immense amount of power which enables him to reduce the inspector and the constable to little more than silly little children searching for an excuse:

Matto: "Certo, certo e lapalissiano, direi ovvio.⁵
Cosi, se in dubbio che le bombe in ferrovia le
abbia messe un ferroviere, possiamo anche
arguire di conseguenza che al palazzo di
giustizia di Roma, quelle famose bombe le
abbia messe un giudice, che al monumento al
milite ignoto le abbia messe il comandante
del corpo di guardia." etc.

Fo leaves a lot of space for this lunatic to play his games and provide us with absurd gags but he balances up the serious material with his farcical techniques by making il Matto spread Fo's messages very casually:

. . . 'le frottole non le usate solo per far cascare gli⁷
indiziati, ma anche per fregare, per sorprendere la
buona fede del popolo credulone e fesso!'

Il Matto manages to make the inspector and the constable rebuke the government and begin to question their profession. They are so

brainwashed that their only hope is the window. As the climax is reached and 'il Contrapasso' determined, the game is spoiled by an officer who enters just as the two are about to jump. Il Matto has to, therefore, break-down his reconstruction and plan ahead. He makes them believe that it was all a joke, just to see how far the anarchist had really been pushed.

In order to reassure them, he says:-

Matto: "Niente affatto Tutto il governo vi ama!^B
 E vi Diro che anche il detto inglese del padrone
 che ammazza i mastini e falso. Nessun padrone
 ha mai ammazzato un mastino per dare
 soddisfazione ad un contadino! Se mai e
 successo il contrario. E se il mastino
 muore nella rissa, il Re manda subito telegrammi
 di cardoglio al padrone. E corone con bandiere!"

Fo can only express such things by having a semi-ingenuous protagonist who appears not to know what he's talking about, but who knows he is making a very important point. For self-satisfaction il Matto ends the scene with the Inspector and the constable singing the anarchist's song. A definite reversal of roles, which proved very humiliating for them. After abandoning this absurd, surreal and imaginary view of the government, il Matto quickly resumes his enquiry and Act II begins. Throughout this act there is a lot of serious irony and the tone becomes more serious.

Just as another climax is being reached, a journalist from the Espresso arrives. She is explicitly modelled on Camilla Cederna a

journalist from Milan who in 1966 wrote an article called 'Pinelli' and in 1971, 'Una Finestra sulla strage.' Il Matto is constrained to mask himself once more. He quickly puts on a false moustache, a black patch with a marble on his eye, a false hand and a wooden leg, all caused by various imperialist wars. He is now the 'Capitano della scientifica'. This new character has two functions. Firstly for his gags, typical of American silent movies, i.e.: Marx Brothers, and secondly to bring to light the fascist tendencies of the ministry.

At first the journalist begins her enquiry with a photocopy of a letter from an anarchist to his friend in prison. Proof is being found at last and the journalist is only acting as a very important prop for il Matto whose interventions at first seem to help the officers, and the satisfaction that these manifest for him proves lethal. The pats on the back make his marble fall out, the hand shakes pull his hand off and finally the officer recognises him.

Leading up to the next climax, that of the revaluation of il Matto's true identity, he still has to undergo his last impersonation of a Bishop. The journalist is thrilled and Bertozzo has had enough. He holds them all at gun point, manacles them and hangs them from clothes pegs. Il Matto then extracts the facsimile bomb with the detonator. He also discloses the fact that everything has been taped. These tapes he will give to papers, parties, ministries etc. "Questa si che sara una bomba."

The reconstruction has nearly been completed. The police have confessed, they are being punished for their wrong doing, il Matto has evidence and he is back to his old self. In fact the end of the play might well have been here:

Matto: "E chi se ne frega . . . importante che scoppi⁹
 lo scandalo . . . Nolimus aut velinus! E che
 anche il popolo italiano come quello americano,
 inglese, diventi socialdemocratico e moderno e
 possa finalmente esclamare 'Siamo nello sterco
 fino al collo e vero ed e proprio per questo che
 camminiamo a testa alta! Chi e conscio di cosa
 gli passa sotto il mento acquista sempre in
 dignita!'"

But Fo must get to the end of the matter. Il Matto is just about to leave when the lights go off and there is a great confusion. Il Matto has escaped through the windows, dead. The scene is the same, the journalist there at the time, the policemen helpless and much obscurity about how it happened. In this case it was Bertozzo who switched off the lights. His hand was loose enough to kiss the journalist's hand so it could only be him.

This grand reversal of roles is very confusing. One is struck so much by the verbal threats, jargon and statements that it is difficult to switch quickly back into a same frame of mind.

The ultimate climax is well wrapped up by actually having the real judge turning up with mass disbelief on everybody's part until they all agree: Si, si . . . cominciamo subito! We are back to square one, but it was not Fo's intention for it to be any other way. He merely wanted people to sit up and to realise how idiotic institutions can be (especially the police institution). 'In Accidental Death of an Anarchist', he points out in such a short space everything that one could possibly wish to hear against the government. He has to. If he is defending this anarchist, then

he may as well go the whole way. The journalist uses, ironically, Fo's own words:

'Questa volta sono d'accordo con lei signor questore . . . ¹⁰

Io credo che uno Scandalo del genere servirebbe a dar prestigio alla polizia. Il cittadino avrebbe la sensazione di vivere in uno stato migliore, con una giustizia un po meno ingiusta . . .

Matto: ". . . I lavoratori gridano basta con la¹¹ vergogna dello sfruttamento bestiale e noi procureremo che diventi un po meno bestiale e ci preoccuperemo soprattutto che non se ne vergognino piu; ma che rimangano sempre sfruttati." etc. etc.

Fo's bitterness manifests itself here. It is one of the few speeches that il Matto makes which harshly satirizes the police strategy and the power of the authorities. The whole play is crammed full of statements of this kind which very nearly brainwash the reader, if it were not for comical interventions.

This, I would say, is one of Fo's most political plays. It can be adapted to any country, because it is merely exploiting the vices and wrongly used power in institutions. However, it is also a grotesque farce. Fo still uses the same techniques as in his other plays. For example: il Matto can be seen as an extension of il Lungo in 'Gli Arcangeli non giocano a Flipper' and these two can be seen as 'giullari' as in 'Mistero Buffo'. Through their supposed ingenuousness and the title of 'buffoon', they can get away with anything. This device is paramount in Fo's plays.

The masquerades used in the Commedia dell'arte are bountiful in all three of these plays and the silent movie action and atmosphere is always maintained. The revolutionary monologues establish a firm hold on the public and hold them in suspense right through until the end. One feels that the play was really written for the public, for their vital participation. One leaves the theatre perplexed and bitter which is essentially Dario Fo's aim.

Interview with Fo

I was happy to have fulfilled, during my year abroad in Italy, a great desire of mine which was to meet this famous author-actor-mimic, Dario Fo. As token of my gratitude, I bought Franca Rame a bouquet of flowers to which she replied:-

"You shouldn't waste money on things like this when you could have given that money to the poor!"

I was amazed, but even through this, I could understand that in her eyes I was acting just through what is called the 'done thing' in society. Whereas for me it was merely a thankful gesture. However she busied herself with the packing and tidying up while Dario sat down spraying himself liberally with penicillin from where he had fallen off his bicycle about 5 minutes before I had arrived. He was quite happy because he had survived from a nasty accident through his clown techniques which he uses in most of his plays.

He began to talk about what seemed to me, his favourite subject which was his career in mime. Very enthusiastically he lept up from his chair and began to make certain grimaces. He ran through 'Caine and

Abel', (which he did excellently) and then discussed the 'giullare' in great detail as I asked him to explain how he came to have such an interest in its function. He introduced the 'giullare', itself dating from medieval times and transposed it to his own 20th century works, because he believes that the 'giullare' still exists although not labelled as such. It is a vital implement for his plays which avoids censorship and is a monthpiece for himself.

We talked about various topics and I somehow thought that he was avoiding questions on politics. But one thing I found was that he admitted that had he known about people's attitude to his 'Fanfani Rapito', he certainly would not have written it, owing to the fact that it was said that he influenced the Red Brigades on 'Moro's' assassination. However time went on and I found that he compared many of his plays to works of art which he had seen in Ravenna and Trento. But he talked a lot about Greek mythology and compared it somehow to certain views he had about politics and religion. One thing he said which particularly stuck in my mind was:

"Io dico che il popolo ha una grandissima religiosita e io mi sento parte del popolo, quindi ho un senso di religiosita e anche del mito, e anche dell'imponderabile. Anche della magia, del suono; cioe, tutto quello che e inclassificabile."

Dario Fo is a mysterious man but has clear-cut views on almost everything. His great passion is architecture and art and himself says that even a fresco of Giotto's would immediately spark off in his mind a 'popular' performance. He spoke in fact for quite a long time on 'Mistero

Buffo' and the use of dialect with great enthusiasm, listing reasons why he wrote it.

This encounter with Fo was very interesting, in that I imagined him far more complex. He is a very simple, energetic and kind person who proved to be so in a story I heard from some of his intimate friends. He apparently helps people in need and especially in one particular case of drug addiction, he succeeded where no-one else did.

Our talk consisted of many of the topics I have already mentioned in the preceding chapters, but also about life in general, which I enjoyed very much because I found it fundamental to get to know him as a person, after having read his plays. It was definitely a worthwhile experience in that I managed to obtain some insight into how his mind works.

A film about Dario Fo will be released in the next three or four months which was researched and produced by an Englishman, Dennis Marks.

REFERENCES

- 1 Il Teatro Politico di Dario Fo. ed. Mazzotta. Milano p. 142.
- 2 Il Teatro Politico di Dario Fo. ed. Mazzotta. Milano p. 142.
- 3 Il Teatro Politico di Dario Fo. ed. Mazzotta. p. 143.
- 4 Teatro Policio di Dario Fo. Editore - Mazzotta. p. 149.
- 5 Teatro Politico di Dario Fo. Editore - Mazzotta. p. 149.
- 6 Teatro Politico di Dario Fo. Mazzotta - p. 153.
- 7 Teatro Politico di Dario Fo. Mazzotta - p. 154.
- 8 Il Teatro Politico di Dario Fo. p. 156.
- 9 Il Teatro Politico di Daro Fo. p. 180.
- 10 Il Teatro Politico di Dario Fo - p 175. Vol 2. Compagni Senza Censura.
- 11 Il Teatro Politico di Dario Fo - p. 176. editore - Mazzotta - Milano.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

By following a chronological pattern in the works of Dario Fo, I have managed to link up with the chain of books called Gli Struzzi in Turin in 1966 with the first two volumes of Le Commedie di Dario Fo.

Vol. I

1. Gli Arcangeli non giocano a Flipper. 1959
2. Aveva due pistole con gli occhi bianchi e neri. 1960
3. Chi ruba un piede e fortunato in amore. 1961

Vol. II

4. Isabella, tre caravelle e un cacciaballe. 1963
5. Settimo: ruba un po meno. 1964
6. La Colpa e sempre del diavolo. 1965
7. In 1974, La Signora e da buttare was released 1967
as a single edition, but the following year, another
volume of 'Gli Struzzi' was published.

Vol. III

8. Grande Pantomima con bandiere e pupazzi piccoli e medi. 1968
9. L'operaio conosce 300 parole, il padrone 1000, per questo 1969
lui e il padrone,
10. Lagami pure che tanto io spacco tutto lo stesso. 1969

The next volume emerged at a cautious distance to the previous, breaking Fo's tempestuous rhythm of speed in his writing.

Vol IV

11. Vorrei morire anche Stasera se dovessi pensare che non e 1970
servito a niente.
12. Tutti Uniti! Tutti insieme! Ma scusa, quello non e il 1971
padrone?
13. Fedayn. 1972

Soon after the harsh polemics brought about by Fo's most disruptive play, Einandi published in 1977, a late V⁰ volume.

Vol V

14. Mistero Buffo - presented by Nuova Scena in 1969 together 1973
with the codicil of:

15. Ci ragiono e canto. 1966

16. The first production of Poer Nano was in 1952 and was published in Milan at that date. It is only in 1976 that the editor Ottaviano, published.

17. Il Novecentonovantanovesimo dei Mille which was written in 1959.

Theatrical reviews had contributed very little to

18. 'Il Dito nell'occhio' 1953, (one being 'Teatro d'oggi') Milano 1954.

19. And for 'Sani da Legare' 1954 - 'Sipario'-Milano 1955

The editor Garzanti, (Milan 1962) had shown his interest with the book: Teatro Comico di Dario Fo which united

20. Ladri, Manichini e donne Nude and

21. Comica Finale, both written in 1958.

However, in 1972, La Comune-Bertani from Verona intervenes on a much more political plane and publishes

22. Ci ragiono e canto

This same editor published:

23. Ordine per Dio.ooo.ooo.ooo.

24. Pum, Pum. Chi e? La Polizia!

And finally, Mazzotta in 1970 presented, this actor-author-producer in the 1st volume of Compagni Senza Censura proceeding in 1977 in Milan with, Il Teatro Politico di

Dario Fo, after having

25. edited in 1979 also 'Morte Accidentale di un Anarchico'
(Vol II 113) 1970.

Other works edited by Bertani appeared in 1974.

- | | |
|---|------|
| 26. Guerra di Popolo in Cile | 1973 |
| 27. Ballate e Canzoni | 1974 |
| 28. Non si paga, non si paga | 1974 |
| and after those, from 1975-1981:- | |
| 29. Il Fanfani Rapito | 1975 |
| 30. La Giullarata | 1975 |
| 31. La marijuana della mamma e la pui bella | 1976 |
| 32. Tutta casa, letto e chiesa | 1977 |
| 33. Storia della tigre e altre storie | 1980 |
| 34. Clacson, Trombette Pernacchi | 1981 |
| 35. L'opera dello sghignazzo | 1981 |

He also published in 1981 a play written in 1960 which has never been performed:-

36. Storia vera di Piero D'Angera che alla Crociata non c'era.

Whereas the following works have been performed but have never been published.

- | | |
|---|------|
| 37. Basta coi Fascisti | 1973 |
| 38. Parliamo di Donne | 1977 |
| 39. La Fine del Mondo (Dio li fa e poi li accoppia) | 1979 |
| 40. Il Fabulazzo osceno | 1982 |

And the latest work which has not yet been published due to the fact that it's only just been finished is PATAPUMFETE staged by the Colombaioni brothers for the very first time on March 3rd 1983 at the Teatro Cristallo in Milan and perhaps will be performed at the Bath

Festival 6th and 7th June 1983. At the end of the play, the Colombaioni portray the story of il Cieco e lo Storpio from Mistero Buffo - a certain element which sheds light on Fo's serious and mysterious views on religion.

It is strange to see that Fo wrote this play to be performed by other people, rather than his own company.

After quite a few years, Fo finally reappears on Italian television on Nuova Rete (23.3.83 Bologna). He depicts in dialect the apocryphal gospel of the miracle of Jesus Christ, where his passion for philological studies of ancient and popular texts once more manifests itself.

A. With reference to the monographies on Dario Fo, recently Gremese has published (Rome 1982) for the first time an excellent photographic commentary and a highly documented Dario Fo. The plays are all listed and dated and with their characters form a flowing and careful analysis.

B. The two volumes by the editor Mazzotta . . . Compagni senza Censura - Teatro Politico di Dario Fo. (Torino 1977) were edited not only for the publication of the actual plays, but also for the polemical and tension filled atmosphere built up from Fo's personal interventions.

One can easily follow the development of Fo's revolutionary concepts and his very original Rivisitazione of the commedia dell'arte.

C. But what seemed to me to be generic and ascetic was the very dry synthesis (little more than 20 lines, excluding titles of plays) in Franca Angelini's Teatro del Novecento da Pirandello a Fo (edit. Laterza - Bari 1980).

The outcome is a diminished Fo who is nothing like the man that emerges in all his grandeur and spontaneity in...

- D. Dario Fo Parla di Dario Fo (edizioni Lerici 1977 -Cosenza) with interviews and introductory notes by Erminia Artese.
- E. Il Teatro di Dario Fo - Dalla Scena alla Piazza (edit. Marsilio - Venezia 1978) by Paolo Puppa, accurately examines, (even under a socio-anthropologic profile) Fo's career as a mimic, his involvement with the public and his vocazione all'apocalisse e a quella dell'intergrazione.
- F. Attento te! Il Teatro politico di Dario Fo. edit Bertani - Verona 1975 and Dario Fo edit. La Nuova Italia - Firenze 1977, by Lanfranco Binni contained some very sharp and interesting observations, always very much to the point.
- G. Equally as interesting is B. Holm's Il Mondo Rovesciato Dario Fo e la fantasia popolare (Stoccolma, Drama 1980).
- H. Various articles have appeared in many reviews, of which I will only look at SIPARIO (Milano).
- January 1963 - B. Argenziano: Dario Fo paragonato a Chaplin.
 - December 1963 - G. Bertolucci: Una Storia di ricerche tra politica e costume.
 - August-September 1964 - F. Vegliani: Dario Fo totalmente compromesso.
 - January 1969 - E. Capriolo: Dario Fo e il nuovo impegno.
 - December 1969 - I. Moscati: Liberta di Consenso.
 - February 1970 - G. Grossi: Nuova Scena - Il Teatro della cultura.
- I. As for French writings, I can only quote the most significant by B. Dort.
- Un libre espace and Allon-y on commence. Farces. (Paris - Francois Maspero 1977).

- J. American works include the Drama Review, March 1978 (New York) on which M. Prospero published Contemporary Italian Theatre and Dario Fo explains and An Interview by L. Ballerini and G. Risso.
- K English works - Theatre Quarterly (London 1979, Vol. IX no. 35) presented Mistero Buffo discussing the giullare and the Teatro popolare.
- L. Dario Fo's Discography

It is all found in LP's or tapes and it is in the care of Il Colettivo Teatrale - La Comune. Certain songs from the plays have been strongly criticised by musical and theatrical criteria. The GRAMELOT is probably of paramount value and can only be heard. This is the highly figurative moment when Fo's gestures transform themselves into words.

----- DARIO FO, u n v o l t o che racconta -----

L'analisi critica dell'opera di Fo tende sempre ad interessarsi dell'aspetto vistoso della sua militanza politica e del suo messaggio di provocazione teatrale per gli spettacoli d'intervento.

Se ciò implica esaltante euforia di parte, corre anche tutti i rischi "crociani" relativi alla "predicazione e all'oratoria", tanto che ci si è soffermati, quasi solo occasionalmente, sulla peculiarità dei mezzi espressivi che caratterizzano Dario Fo e che costituiscono il suo momento meno contingente.

Così, di fronte a questa singolarissima personalità, che, anche in mancanza di luci e di palcoscenico, sostiene, nell'esclusiva solitudine dell'artista, la scena di MISTERO BUFFO per oltre tre ore mantenendo intatto la tensione del pubblico, si è soltanto escogitata la troppo comoda formula della MAGIA IPNOTICA DI UN ATTORE-STREGONE e della rivisitazione del TESPI HYPOCRITES. (*)

Come se si potesse porre in secondo piano l'impegno austero e tenace degli anni di studio e di preparazione, il fervore di collaborazione aperta del collettivo teatrale, l'attività paziente di ricercatori rigorosi e, fondamentale, l'originale capacità intuitiva e la perspicuità di presa degli avvenimenti, vivendoli, ricreandoli e rappresentandoli in modo assolutamente nuovo e mordente.

Se di "fascinazione" si tratta, è bene chiamarla per nome e dire che è Arte.

Da questa angolatura si può infatti mettere a fuoco e approfondire (spiegandolo dall'interno) il fermento che anima anche i dibattiti politico-ideologici per definire il nucleo dello stile di Fo e delle problematiche che lo sostengono esaminando più attentamente il rapporto che intercorre tra sentimento e raffigurazione, tra linguaggio ed immagine.

(*) cfr. Lanfranco Binni: DARIO FO - Ed. LA NUOVA ITALIA - Firenze 1977 pg. 56

L'originaria irriducibilità tra l'una e l'altro non può condurre che a c o r r i s p o n d e n z e v e r b a l i a n a l o g i c h e per la metafisica inaccessibilità del "fenomeno" all'intimità del "noumeno".

Tuttavia le forme istituzionalmente codificate della nostra cultura pretendono di coprire coi loro simboli tutta la realtà classificandola secondo gli schemi percettivi di un linguaggio prefigurato.

In tal modo resta in ombra una zona che sfugge alla presa dei codici perché non si lascia imprigionare né da griglie linguistiche né da "segni" convenzionali.

Ed è questo il Campus "aurorale" dei riti gestuali e del gramelot, di cui Dario è un signore incontrastato per la sua primigenia vocazione al mimo.

Ne consegue che egli è da scoprire prima ancora di ascoltarlo perché già il suo volto espande un'irrefrenabile comunicatività.

"In principio era il mimo". Ora lo si può confermare con una consapevolezza maggiore perché lo zoom della telecamera ci condensa il mimo nel volto di Fo sommando coincidenze congeniali.

Quando la sua faccia riempie (e domina) lo schermo, racconta la realtà traducendola in un linguaggio autonomo e descrittivo, come una musica che rifugge dalle parole.

In quel volto mobilissimo si leggono e si inseguono, in rapidissima successione, tutte le sequenze dei sentimenti, capace, com'è, di concentrazione intensissima e di serietà imperturbabili, che poi si sciolgono d'improvviso in uno sberleffo sorprendente.

Gli basta un ammiccare appena avvertibile, il palpito dei muscoli, la smorfia delle labbra, il roteare degli occhi o la risata, schietta e incoercibile, perché quel volto "professionale" nei primi piani televisivi diventi una s c u l t u r a a n i m a t a con tutte le variabili di una vitalità dinamica.

La fluidità dei passaggi comporta un attentissimo dosaggio delle espressioni, dal sarcasmo icastico alle invettive, dalle sfumate cadenze dell' andantino al sonoro unisono del "fortissimo".

E vi si avverte la naturalezza di un gusto affinato da un equilibrio interiore che conosce tanto la serietà della vita quanto l'offesa della stupidità.

Cosicché Fo é tutte le espressioni del suo volto. Prima ancora di essere attore, é tutta la gamma di possibilità archetipiche, che precedono la parola nel suo farsi, é il background su cui si fonda un'inesausta abilità per cui l'immagine é già presente e preannuncia il discorso non ancora intrapreso ma già prefigurato e pregustato.

Se si prova ad azzerare l'audio del televisore, gli uomini che si affidano soltanto alla parola appaiono improvvisamente vuoti o risibili. Ma il volto di Fo, naturalmente significativo, continua a raccontare, sorgivamente libero dai condizionamenti verbali.

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Questo aspetto dell'arte teatrale di Fo é di tale concretezza da doversi porre in relazione al valore funzionale che egli dà alla Parola sul versante della comunicazione sociale portando sulla scena la vigorosa impostazione di Don Milani e sollecitando gli operai alla presa di coscienza della loro dignità anche e soprattutto sul terreno del linguaggio.

Non é dunque quella di Fo una piacevolezza tecnica o puramente teoretica perché egli la sente come un'esigenza vitale, che fa corpo col suo teatro e con la sua vita trovando il suo completamento nella ravisitazione e nella riscoperta del gramelot.

Il gramelot non é dunque soltanto l'espedito

furbesco del servitore che vuole imbrogliare il padrone né quello del guitto che, per dire e non dire, finge di parlare una lingua che non conosce, se non nelle desinenze e nelle assonanze.

Parlare di soli contenuti è sempre riduttivo, specialmente nel caso Fo.

Il gramelot infatti è lo sviluppo del rapporto tra realtà e linguaggio scenico. Esso ci permette di considerare una componente psicanalitica, pur con l'intento esplicito e consapevole di evitare qualsiasi forzatura.

Càpita infatti, camminando nella stessa direzione alla ricerca della verità e dell'uomo, che arte e scienza possano diventare occasionali compagni di viaggio. Specialmente quando l'individuo è condizionato dalle mistificazioni dei mass-media e " conoscere se stessi vuol dire essere, vuol dire essere padroni di se stessi, distinguersi, uscire fuori dal caos..per liberarsi e dai privilegi e dai pregiudizi e dalle idolatrie" (*)

Fo definisce importante questa citazione gramsciana, tolta da IL GRIDO DEL POPOLO del 29/1/1916, che lo spettatore non sprovveduto oggi ritrova svolta ed analizzata nell'ANATOMIA DELLA DISTRUTTIVITA' UMANA di Erich Fromm(**) o sistematicamente approfondita nel percorso speleologico della vita psichica da C.Gustav Jung. (***)

(*) Cfr. Teatro Politico dell'Associazione Nuova Scena: "COMPAGNI SENZA CENSURA-Gabriele Mazzotta Editore 1970- pg.29

(**) Cfr. Modàdori-Milano 1978 (Anatomy of human destructiveness) Oscar-

(***) Cfr. C.G. Jung: L'UOMO E I SUOI SIMBOLI (Man and his symbols) Edizioni Casini-Firenze-Roma- 1976

Fo non é pirandelliano, ma sa intuire sotto la pelle degli avvenimenti il turbamento dell'inconscio che inquieta la nostra esistenza.

Non traduce "in chiaro" gli squilibri della psiche né li spiega, fedele a criteri di concretezza storica marxista, ma conosce e lavora sui meccanismi dialettici tra conscio e inconscio per proporci una contestazione problematica, "strumento di liberazione delle classi subalterne" (*)

Talvolta é come se a Fo sembri che la Parola si logori facilmente perché il suo metallo risulta tenero e cedevole tanto che il segno consuma il contenuto dentro il guscio intatto della scrittura.

Ed ecco allora che l'immagine si dissocia prospetticamente in un gioco di illusorio miraggio facendo brillare la metafora surreale della pesca dei campanili.

C'è nell'aria anche il fòducioso fantasma di Don Chisciotte, ma é sempre dalla parte opposta di Dario Fo.

Così Fo ha riattivato il gramelot, in cui il suono la fa da protagonista, commentato dall'accompagnamento della gestualità, che preme sul "continuum" di un silenzioso bordone mescolando umoralmente effetti ed evidenze con il contrappunto sapiente di pause e silenzi.

Il gramelot simboleggia il rifiuto degli stereotipi, nega le "~~xxx~~ utilità arbitrarie" perché sovverte la logica sulla scia del principio di libertà e giunge ad una trasposizione di sentimenti, che noi tendiamo a nascondere nelle stesse profondità da cui nascono le invenzioni metamorfiche e le visioni allusive del surrealismo.

Un primo risvolto di conferma ci può venire da Ø Oxford e dalla ricerca sistematica di DESMOND MORRIS, che ci avverte come gli individui di limitate capacità nell'espressione verbale hanno anche un vocabolario gestuale altrettanto povero. E viceversa.

(*) Cfr. L. Binni - Op. Cit. - pg. 8

Nella sua diligente indagine (*) egli ha ripercorso la geografia e la storia della cultura gestuale in Italia (e non soltanto in Italia) dalle pitture murali delle tombe etrusche e dalle raffigurazioni vascolari dei Dauni nell'antica Puglia fino ai graffiti romani e al segno con cui il popolo del circo chiedeva la grazia o la morte del gladiatore sconfitto.

Sembra dunque esserci qualcosa di specificamente connaturato tra certo teatro italiano e la gestualità mimica (che imita la parola per sostituirla) o quella simbolica (che vuol porsi come espressione autonoma); c'è qualcosa di mordace che si rifà da sempre agli umori popolari dell'ITALUM ACETUM nei fescennini, delle maschere dell'Atellana, prima e poi, del grande Plauto.

Tradotto nell'attualità dei termini jungiani, l'interesse di Fo verte anche sul contrasto fra i "pensieri controllati" e la ricchezza immaginativa della favola, che "compensa" le deficienze della realtà e del quotidiano.

Ma i conflitti della nevrosi, che alimentano miti e demoni nell'uomo di oggi, sono esorcizzati da Fo soltanto al fine di costruire una nuova moralità per mezzo della satira, rinsanguando "secundum Brecht" (**) la nostra tradizione etica teatrale (**).

Fo parte sempre all'attacco, non lo si trova mai in difesa o sul ritmo di "XXXXXXX Armòamoci e partite", egli si pone senza esitazione al centro delle contraddizioni elaborando elaborando quanto ha appreso in una forma tecnico-teatrale, che L.Binni ha dichiarato "proiezione nell'assurdo" (****).

(*) Cfr. L'UOMO & I SUOI GESTI, LA SCIMMIA NUDA e il recentissimo I GESTI nei "Saggi" Mondadori alla fine del 1983

(**) Cfr. COMPAGNI SENZA CENSURA-Op.Cit. pg.30: "Brecht dice che il momento più alto della satira, e quindi del ^{far} prender coscienza alla gente, perché brucia, perché arriva in profondità, è proprio il momento del grottesco".

(***) Cfr. Dario Fo: BALLATE E CANZONI_Bertani Edit. Verona 1974-pg.17:

"A teatro tanto più si va sperimentando verso il nuovo, tanto più occorre affondare nel passato".

(****) L.Binni-Op.Cit. pg.20.

In questo clima di determinazioni esaltanti e di tensione, che baroccamente Giordano Bruno avrebbe proclamato "eroici furori", sono da interpretare e approfondire (dal punto di vista formale) le enunciazioni programmatiche dell'Associazione Nuova Scena: "Ogni spettacolo dovrà quindi affrontare "una tematica" fondamentale, TRATTANDOLA A FONDO, PARTENDO DALLE SUE ORIGINI e proporre una linea di condotta per la soluzione dei problemi in essa contenuti". (*)

Le specificazioni, sottolineate con le lettere maiuscole, comportano non soltanto una valenza potenziale di psicologia del profondo, ma sono anche venate di sottili allusioni surrealiste.

"Ne sono certo: tutto comincia da dove si nasce... Vere sono le storie INVENTATE da uomini VERI... quel certo surreale, fantastico, grottesco, che è alla base dei miei lavori ... dai miei compaesani ho imparato a guardare e a leggere le cose in quel certo modo... con l'aggiunta di un enorme piacere nel ravvisare il grottesco, il rovesciamento, l'illogico". (da Appunti inediti del 1960) (**).

Nei racconti dei FABULATORI della piazza di S. Giano la povera gente vedeva proiettarsi le sue frustrazioni, l'osceno del fabulazzo popolare (che Freud ci spinge ad indagare) e, in "nuce" la vastità del mondo inconscio, per cui Jung chiede la conoscenza di se stessi per una piena vitalità, che si esprime per mezzo di simboli e di immagini.

Fo risolve queste potenzialità con un sentimento di liberazione, che è vivissima e concreta perché il vero "loico" è troppo spesso prigioniero delle rigorose premesse da cui parte e resta legato a conclusioni "algebriche" e cioè astratte.

(*) Cfr. Op. Cit. COMPAGNI SENZA CENSURA - vol I - pg. 16

(**) Cfr. Op. Cit. DARIO FO: Ballate e canzoni - pg. 17

Come la Parola tende a "logorarsi", anche il realismo di Fo può stemperarsi, se l'immagine si dissocia rincorrendone un'altra per un segreto richiamo di nostalgia allusiva (*), alla maniera di due steli che si svolgano dalla stessa matrice germinale.

Così avviene che il filo della lenza sfugga impigliandosi nella punta aguzza di una guglia, che trema sull'acqua del lago e si lascia rubare dalla fantasia del poeta.

Iscritte nel cielo, queste due forme mostrano la loro capacità di sintonia rammentando suggestive consonanze Leopardiane per il legame di valenza che trasmette ad una figura la vitalità dell'altra.

L'abbozzo pittorico Leopardiano dello ZIBALDONE (**)
si sofferma su "una casa pensile in aria sospesa con funi a una stella".

La serena infanzia di Dario Fo porta invece impresso il meditato e più casalingo ricordo di "strani pescatori che, dando troppa forza al lancio della lenza, pescano dall'altra parte campanili." (***)

(*) Si noti l'interesse con cui WILLIAM GOLDING, Nobel 1983, in LORD OF THE FLIES, insiste nel suo vivido realismo portandolo a soluzioni speculari nelle similitudini, dove il taglio ha una sua nota musicale di ritorno, ugualmente però vibrata sul FILO (come su di un pentagramma) ma senza quelle trasmissioni remote, a cui ci rimanda Leopardi. Cfr., per esempio, Op.Cit. (published by Faber and Faber-London-30th impression-1982, pg.63): "The glittering sea rose up, moved apart in planes of blatant impossibility; the coral reef and the few, stunted palms that clung to the more elevated parts, would float up into the sky, would quiver, be plucked apart, like rain-drops on a WIRE".

(**) Cfr. G. Leopardi: TUTTE LE OPERE-vol. II - Lo Zibaldone-SANSONI Editore-Firenze 1969-pg.109, datata 1 Ottobre 1820-.

(***) Cfr. L. Binni: DARIO FO-Op.Cit. pg.15, dove si sognano anche "strani corridori su barche...che si trascinano dietro isole intere", "persone che gareggiano nella corsa con le lumache", "esploratori del mondo sottomarino...immobile e pulitissimo."

Collega i due autori un filo, che corre lontano nell'aria, come quello di un aquilone che fugge dalla realtà per un più lieve desiderio di poesia.

Ricorrono ugualmente a distanza prospettica i due piani, su cui l'immagine si evolve e si stampa andando dal concreto immediato ad un'atmosfera più rarefatta e remota.

Leopardi lo definisce "quel caro immaginar mio primo" ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ ponendolo in relazione con le "rimembranze", che sono capaci di attraversare tutto lo spessore dei sedimenti posti dall'esistenza: "Un luogo, un sito, una campagna, per bella che sia, se non desta alcuna rimembranza, non è poetica punto a vederla....La rimembranza è essenziale e principale nel sentimento poetico, non per altro, se non perché il presente, qual ch'egli sia, non può essere poetico; e il poetico, in uno o in altro modo, si trova sempre consistere nel lontano, ~~nel lontano~~, nell'indefinito, nel vago" (*).

Basta aggiungervi una nota di colore e su "le temps" che "n'a point de rive" si possono veder fluttuare i pesci con le ali, violini e orologi di Marc Chagall, che i due teneri amanti sognano spinti dalla stessa ventata d'immaginazione (**)

Sull'humus di queste componenti è cresciuta la poetica teatrale di Fo, pronta a forzare le situazioni "nella direzione dell'assurdo" (***) .

La sua scenografia ne trae un naturale vigore di aggressività e il significato delle dissonanze stridenti: In "ISABELLA, TRE CARAVELLE E UN CACCIABALLE", ad esempio, la dossacrazione del potere è già proposta visivamente da quel corteo

(*) Cfr. G. Leopardi-Op.Cit. Vol II "Lo Zibaldone" pg.1199 ed il seguente passo successivo a pg.1216: "Un luogo ci riesce romantico e sentimentale, non per sé, che non ha nulla di ciò, ma perché ci desta la memoria di un altro luogo da noi conosciuto, nel quale poi se non ci troveremo attualmente, non ci riuscirà (né mai ci riuscirà) punto romantico né sentimentale" (10 Marzo ~~1828~~ 1829).

(**) Cfr. M. CHAGALL: "Le temps n'a point de rive"-1930-39. Collection, The Museum of Modern Art-New York.

(***) Cfr. L. Binni-Op.Cit.-pg.20.

che avanza con cadenza "mezzo carnevalesca e mezzo funebre".

Il richiamo ai "CAPRICHOS" di Goya é esplicito ed evoca figurativamente l'ambito di un assurdo e beffardo cattolicesimo spagnolo con un realismo atroce.

Ma la citazione di James Ensor é ancor più emblematica perché sembra anticipare la prima parte del cammino artistico di Fo in modo da ripetere lo schema da noi proposto in un döttico di coerente complementarità dove Ensor pone le premesse che poi Dario porta a rigorose conseguenze nella seconda tavola.

G.C.Argan l'ha rilevato perché, dopo un primo ripudio da parte della società belga, irritata per la sua acre polemica contro la "rispettabilità", Ensor viene poi adottato e catturato ufficialmente, sia pure per sadismo autocritico, accettandone anche "la ribellione dei segni all'obbligo di significare" (*).

Accentuando ironia e grottesco, come tipica espressione della cultura popolare, Fo condivide con Ensor vari atteggiamenti, compreso quello d'attualizzazione della tematica religiosa, ma ha ben chiari i termini con la società e con la "libidine DEL POTERE", sa che "non basta mettere in luce vizi e pregiudizi, contraddizioni e ingiustizie" perché, in questo modo, "si fa soltanto del TEATRO DI DENUNCIA."(**). Ed é risoluto nell'evitare qualsiasi ritorno di catarsi: "Noi non vogliamo liberare dall'indignazione la gente che viene, non vogliamo che la rabbia resti dentro ma che diventi operativa" (***) .

Molti spettatori non discutono questa scelta conseguente alla più ortodossa etica della lotta di classe ma altri si sono chiesti se questa possa veramente discendere dalla sostanza della poetica di Fo o non rientri piuttosto nell'invadenza di contenuti politici, che trascinano dai loro limiti.

(*) Cfr. G.C. Argan: L'ARTE MODERNA 1770/1970 - Ed. Sansoni (Firenze 1980)

pg. 261

(**) Cfr. Op. Cit. COMPAGNI SENZA CENSURA - vol I - pg. 15

(***) Cfr. " " " " " " " 189.

Oggi il riflusso nel privato e le problematiche dell'epoca postindustriale e computerizzata fanno ritenere, sotto vari aspetti, esaurita la spinta d'esaltazione immaginativa e pratica del Sessantotto.

E tuttavìa, nel caso di Fo, emergono, forse con maggior evidenza, le radici profonde della sua autentica ispirazione umana e poetica: la sua esigenza di dover incidere radicalmente ed "esemplarmente" per la trasformazione della società e "il suo istintivo attaccamento alla vita degli umili" (*)

Non c'è dubbio infatti che "tutta" l'opera di Fo è dovuta alla presa e allo spessore della sua personalità.

Quando Fo polemizza contro "lo stile borghese" (*), lo individua a livello politico-sociale ma anche in una mentalità intimamente opaca, senza creatività e perciò ripetitiva.

Egli conosce troppo bene il travaglio continuo di rinnovarsi ogni giorno, di mantenere un'aspra fedeltà a se stessi perché c'è subito una caduta di tensione (e non soltanto a teatro), se la vita si fissa in uno schema lasciando alla Parola il solo valore di comunicazione, non quello di interiorità espressiva.

La Parola "vera" può scorrere in un suo ritmo, piano o alterato, ma deve essere inevitabilmente carica di quella fatica di vivere che è capace di farci ritrovare in profondità e di restare sempre accanto a noi, anche quando l'attore-autore la chiama, di volta in volta, ispirazione o impegno, dovere creativo o autonomia dell'arte o "compagna Utopia".

All'interno di questa sofferenza si trova quel nucleo di contatto che, dentro noi stessi, ci fa scorgere qualcosa di universalmente valido ritrovando l'uomo smarrito sotto il peso delle etichette di serie e delle variabili quotidiane, nella riscoperta di una volontà comune di dialogo al di là di tutti gli antagonismi ideologici.

Dipende da questo se il fatto teatrale autentico ha il volto, sempre giovane, dell'imprevisto.

Noi l'abbiamo riconosciuto in quello, cordialissimo, onnicomprensivo e catalizzatore di DARIO FO, sigla e dimostrazione di un'arte

(*) Cfr. Op. Cit. Compagni senza censura - Vol. II - pg. 131.

che anima e sorregge (ma soprattutto supera) gli stessi conte= ti che esprime.

Con una ancora intatta potenzialità creativa.

DARIO FO é anche questo.

O almeno così lo si può vedere da un più asettico osservatorio Inglese.