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> Clowns are grotesque blasphemers against all our pieties. That's why we need them. They're our alter egos.
> (Dario Fo, Cambridge, May 1987)[1]

Americans writing about theatre have been pronouncing Dario Fo's work extraordinary, whether for performance or political reasons, or for both. "For the past decade," claimed Joel Schechter in 1985, "Dario Fo has been Europe's most popular political satirist."[2] "So many theatres have included Fo in their recent seasons," wrote Ron Jenkins in 1986, "that he has become the most-produced contemporary Italian playwright in the U.S."[3] American producers interested in social satire seem to have become less leery of this zany Italian genius who publicly thanked his "fellow actor," Ronald Reagan, for the marvelous promotion afforded his work when the State Department denied him an American visa for several years.

Dario Fo is the brilliant successor of a comic tradition of mime and improvisation which extends not only back to Greek *phlyakes* and Roman *fabulae*, but also includes both medieval *giullari* (to whom he so often refers) and Italian *commedia dell'arte*. He is, in addition, the heir of two twentieth-century Italian geniuses of the comic spirit – Totò and Eduardo. The first connection is evident from the transcription of Fo's remarks filmed to honor Totò (1898–1967) in 1978 and published in English translation last year. He pronounces Totò an "epic actor" (nomenclature he often applies to his own technique)[4] – "he uses all the elements which allow a break with naturalism."[5] Fo also states that Totò is true to the *commedia dell'arte* tradition since, by using body and face in opposition to one another, he creates a true mask (Fo's use of masks and puppets in the 50s and 60s was extensive).[6] Finally, Fo celebrates gleefully Totò's destruction of the fourth wall by citing an example of Totoian conversation with a tardy audience member:

If someone arrived late when the show had started, Totò interrupted everything and said: "So you've come at last? ... We were really worried ... Do sit down ..."[7]

This dialog is identical to one which Fo engaged in with a late-comer to the James Joyce Theater in New York City during a May 1986 performance of his signature piece, *Mistero Buffo*.

You will find a[n] ... authentic ... version of its [commedia dell'arte's] artificial clowning in the Neapolitan comedian Totò. And for another side of the tradition – not famous at all unfortunately – you must go to Eduardo.[8]

The other twentieth-century figure with whom Fo must be compared is Eduardo De Filippo (1900–84). Referred to familiarly by Italians as "Eduardo," and by Eric Bentley as the "Son of Pulcinella," this prolific Neapolitan actor/playwright exemplified a strongly realistic tradition of acting. In 1950 Bentley identified Eduardo as perhaps the finest actor in Italy today "more likely ... to be the heir of *commedia dell'arte* than any other important performer now living."[9] There was a precision to Eduardo's performances which was uncanny, which left the viewer with the sense of having witnessed the quintessential interpretation of the character in question.[10] This "polish" seems to be what Fo, in speaking to acting students in London, termed "*souplesse*."

What makes ... great swimmer[s] is the fact that they have coordination. You're hardly aware of how their bodies move ... you hardly see them breathe ... *That* is *souplesse*. It's the same *souplesse*, litheness, that great actors have. They don't show that they are exerting themselves. They make you forget that they are acting.[11]

Fo possesses "*souplesse*" to an astonishing degree and he practises a performance style probably closer to the "Ruzzante" form of *commedia* which he admires than "any other important performer now living."[12] Fo sees himself as the inheritor of the "realistic" acting style of the Italian popular theatre which, he explains, encompasses an epic dimension as well:

The epic style derives from realism. But it is characterised by the self-aware detachment of the actor; the actor is critical of what he acts. He does not confine himself to conveying information, to telling something, and then letting the audience sort it all out. He seeks to provide the audience with the necessary data for a reading of the piece.[13]

As I hope to demonstrate later in this paper, Fo's performance style also exemplifies Bentley's admiring words about Eduardo: "a series of statements, vocal and corporeal ... beautiful in their clean economy ... in [their] relation to each other and to the whole."[14]

Like Eduardo before him, Fo is a highly successful Italian playwright who has created excitement in international theatre circles. Eduardo wrote domestic tragi-comedies produced in translation around the world which, as Bentley put it, were both traditional and original and in which he "put his finger on the black moral spot."[15] Fo's theatre has been defined at various times as agit-prop, throw-away, political, improvisational, a theatre of blasphemy, and popular. His first translator in the United States, Suzanne Cowan, wrote in 1979:

> To give a full account of Dario Fo's theatrical career would really be tantamount to writing a history of postwar Italy, because his work can only be understood as a continuous, uniquely creative response to the major social and political developments of the past thirty years.[16]

Like Eduardo before him, Fo has been greeted with instant popularity in many countries while being given, initially at least, a somewhat cooler reception in the U.S.[17] The failure, for example, of Eduardo's *Saturday, Sunday and Monday* in 1974 Broadway production despite its huge British success in 1973 seems to have been a virtual blueprint for Fo's British-American experience with *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*. This "grotesque" farce about a "tragic farce"[18] achieved tremendous success in London during 1979–81, only to open and close rapidly on Broadway in Fall of 1984.

What seems clear, however, is that Fo's work has created an ongoing interest in American university and repertory theatres which Eduardo's did not. This is due in part to an increased American awareness of international theatre trends fostered by the academy's more frequent conference and exchange programs, and also perhaps by more frequent mass-media culture coverage. Continued American interest in Fo's work springs also from our desire to stay abreast of such trends: Tony Mitchell, in the first English-language book devoted to Fo, states flatly that by 1978, "Fo was already the most widely performed playwright in world theatre."[19] But it is the fact that Fo and Rame have finally been able to practise their crafts of acting and directing in this country that has led to acclaim in the American theatre about this extraordinary team.

Dario Fo's performance of *Mistero Buffo (Comic Mystery Play)* and Franca Rame's performance of *Tutta Casa, Letto, e Chiesa (It's All Bed, Board and Church)* at the James Joyce Theatre after a tour which played in Boston, New Haven, and Washington, D.C. were remarkably different from usual Off-Broadway fare. Two immediate adjustments of perspective were built into this Obie-award-winning experience. The verbal comedy of these one-person shows, performed on alternate evenings, worked through instant translation (Ron Jenkins as translator for Fo took on the persona of straight-man) and projected overhead sub-titles. Also, the house remained half-lit throughout performance in order to permit interaction with the audience, something accomplished with ease and intimacy despite the "language barrier." Rame's

work was a series of monologs treating the "sexual slavery of women" and played "in a style that recalls the sexy, comic intelligence of Mae West."[20] "Dario Fo mesmerizes in *Mistero Buffo*" began *The Boston Globe* review,[21] for each audience was treated to an astounding range of both physical comedy and historical context, which Fo wove anew each evening as he proceeded deftly through the fresh improvisation of a show encompassing a dozen texts.

> For several of the scenes, Fo employs "grammelot" – a nonsense language he invents phonetically as if it were Northern Italian dialect, English, French, Italian. He becomes transformed, before our eyes and without costume or prop, from a chatty fellow letting us in on historical gossip, into an Italian peasant, a French advisor to the king, an English lawyer of high place, a pope. Each sketch is politically biting, physically hilarious and theatrically successful in its maintenance of character.[22]

In reviewing *Mistero Buffo* for *The New York Times,* Mel Gussow introduced Fo as "an outrageous gadfly" and mentioned Richard Pryor, Father Guido Sarducci and Monty Python by way of comparison. Mr. Gussow concluded with mention of other names:

> With his mobile face and body, he is a cartoon in motion, loping across the stage with the antelopean grace of Jacques Tati, doing a Jackie Gleason away-we-go to demonstrate the Italian perfection of the art of women-watching.[23]

Both sets of references are on target. Fo's performance was unforgettable because it conjured up a complex battery of historical and cultural perspectives, while simultaneously satirizing their contingent political realities. Clad in black work-day jersey and slacks and sharing a bare stage with only his translator, Fo created in the mind's eye of his audience chaotic crowds, lavish costumes, and dramatic conflicts resolved by the machinations of a laughing clown-narrator in favor of those without power.

Fo's formidable powers of persuasion through laughter illuminate his on-stage persona. These same powers are seen from another perspective in his work as teacher and director. Most immediately obvious is the appeal of the comradeship and community which Fo creates about him, beginning with that strong emotional, intellectual, and artistic partnership which he and Franca Rame, his wife, have shared for thirty-four years. This partnership extends not only to their own acting company, currently La Comune of Milan, but also to the manner in which Fo and Rame interact with any company.[24] While Western theatre is by definition an art form organized in hierarchical fashion, Fo's concept of how to work in the theatre appears consistently egalitarian. This philosophy ultimately translates into a specific reality: everything which appears on stage and/or takes place on stage is in some fashion touched by Fo. Whatever the form of this nurturing, its manner is one of co-authorship, of "we" rather than of "I" and "you."

Along with this comradeship comes a powerful charisma which Dario Fo possesses and uses automatically, effortlessly in his quest for the ideal performance of his troupe. He is a director whose every syllable and step on stage are noted by everyone, near and far. Members of the American Repertory Theatre, a young, vital professional company with excellent credentials, spoke glowingly of their learning under Fo's tutelage during rehearsals for *Archangels Don't Play Pinball* in Spring 1987. "Dario exerts an amazing influence – he has a way of working with actors. No one at ART has ever attained this popularity."[25] "I want to get a grant to follow Dario Fo around. This is the guy I've been waiting to learn from all my life."[26] A visiting university director added, "I'm on leave this year. I'd be in Milan if Dario were in Milan. I'm in Cambridge because he's here."[27] Such remarks take on additional weight when one realizes that they represent English-speaking theatre folk describing their Italian-speaking theatre mentor. Dario's ability to communicate goes beyond the limitation of language.

Then there is the power of example. Fo the performer is able to illustrate what Fo the director has to say. Fo and Rame conducted five theatre workshops in London in late spring 1983 the transcripts of which were subsequently published and translated. The student/teacher exchanges during these sessions underscore the credibility in the theatre of a director who practises in his own performances what he preaches to his students. For example:

> QUESTION When you did the three situations exercise earlier, the only way that we spectators could laugh at the comedy of it was because we already understood the situation, because you had explained it to us. But how, then, if you are the actor, creating the situation, how do you express it without using even more obvious methods of expression?
> DARIO FO Theatre has always had *prologues,* even when they are not declared as such. There is an old tradition of theatre in Italy, which had prologues which were really masterpieces. In fact, the rest of the plays has often been lost, and the prologues have remained in their own right. There is, for example, the famous prologue: ... "Ah, if I could only become invisible." The situation is already presented in it ... in that one sentence it already gives you the situation. The actor comes on and explains the things he could do if he was invisible. (*He acts out the prologue*)[28]

The enjoyment of watching the persuasive power of Fo's directing and teaching is enhanced by the knowledge that what he offers his actors and students alike is empowerment – empowerment as actors and empowerment as authors. The answer to two questions posed to him demonstrate something of the private Dario Fo's modest character and a sense of the public Fo's ability to teach effortlessly, with "*souplesse*."

QUESTION What influence do you want your work to have on American theatre?
DARIO FO I don't know.
QUESTION What is the connection between political theatre and improvisation?
DARIO FO The choice of an improvisational form of theatre is already a political one – because improvisational theatre is never finished, never a closed case, always open-ended.
Improvisational theatre is open on a space level. If we are performing in a large theatre, a stadium which seats 5000 in one night and in a factory which accommodates 300 the next, we must improvise, by necessity, and without a dozen rehearsals. Out of necessity we signal to one another and stretch out what we do to fill the stadium or contract it to fit into the factory.
Improvisational theatre is open on an emotional level. Audiences are not the same every evening. Different things have happened to them on a political level. Someone may have been shot, someone may have died; an audience is an emotionally different entity every night. The actor in an improvisational theatre is open to audience mood and builds upon it, using it as a springboard for what he is going to do.
Improvisational theatre is open on an intellectual level. New events happen every day. These events can't be ignored, but must be included, and the old ones, if they are no longer useful, put aside. The *commedia dell'arte* troupes were often the chroniclers of their times, bringing to their often ill-informed audiences up-dates of what was going on in the country of the audience that evening and of what was going on in outlying countries. *Improvisational theatre must be a theatre of ideas, not merely of technique.*[29]

Fo's last statement holds the heart of the matter. It is clear that his concept of theatre is both improvisational and political, and it is also clear that he demands a body of knowledge, a challenge to the intellect, from a theatrical event. So do many theatre artists. What is unique about Fo is that, rather than coveting that creative act known as "playwriting" as is traditional, he asks of his actors that they become his co-writers.[30] "After I leave [the actors] must read newspapers every day and listen to and watch news broadcasts every day, and include pertinent material into the *Archangel* performances."[31] When an actor had suggested that perhaps one person be put in charge of updating the text, this was Fo's reply: "No, no, no one has to be in charge – you all do it! Every actor must practice self-discipline, trying out material and judging its effectiveness carefully, eliminating it if audience reaction is not favorable."[32] It is in this manner that Fo empowers his actors to grow, to stretch, to develop, for he invites them not simply to interpret someone else's ideas, but also to initiate their own.

Which brings us to Dario Fo, playwright, produced in translation in the United States. How, given Fo's convictions concerning improvisation about

current political events, does this work? A quick production/publication profile offers several revealing statistics. To date there have been American, English-language productions mounted of six full-length works by Fo (*We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay!, Accidental Death of an Anarchist, Almost By Chance A Woman: Elizabeth, Archangels Don't Play Pinball, About Face* and *A Day Like Any Other*) and two full-length works by Fo and Rame (*Orgasmo Adulto Escapes from the Zoo* and *Open Couple*). Since 1979 there have been at least one, but as many as three American productions of these works annually. Fo's plays have been mounted by regional theatres, touring groups, university theatres, Off-Broadway and Broadway producers. In addition to numerous texts imported from Great Britain, there are currently available American publications of five of the works produced here. Plans are in progress for an American translation of Fo's four-hundred-page theoretical work on theatre, *Manuale minimo dell'autore* (Torino: Einaudi, 1987). Finally, both American journalists and scholars have begun writing about Fo to the extent that their major contribution to an already impressive European bibliography of secondary sources about his work appears imminent.

Each published introduction or preface to a Fo work contains some reference to the need to update or adapt material, while at the same time preserving the playwright's intention. Such directives suggest the problems inherent in revision. "A Note on the Text," which introduces Samuel French's edition of *Accidental Death of an Anarchist,* for example, reads in part:

> For the Arena Stage production and the subsequent Broadway production ... Nelson [the adaptor] revised the dialogue for the American stage, and added some references to current politics ... Subsequently, Fo asked for further changes ... Future productions may require further alteration of political references, unless our President is elected for a life term, and outlives the century.[33]

Ron Jenkin's "Translator's Preface," which introduces *Theater*'s edition of *Elizabeth*, offers both directive and sound explanation:

> For the American version of the play Mr. Fo and I have substituted references to American politics for the original references to Italian politics. This text is presented only as a record of what was prepared for the Yale Repertory Theater production. It should not be performed without prior approval from the translator and playwright. ... Their [Fo's and Rame's] work cannot be translated without reference to their performance technique, and translations of their work should not be performed without taking their performance style into account. It is delicately balanced between detachment and passion, tragedy and comedy, intimacy and showmanship.[34]

A perusal of American reaction to Fo's work indicates frequent critical reference, both positive and negative, to the current American politics alluded

to during the course of a Fo play. Three writers had three different reactions to this question when they reviewed the Broadway production of *Accidental Death* in 1984:

The play may have deserved to be successful in Italy, where its dealing with an actual case of police defenestration was doubtless audacious and salutary. But it has far less resonance here, and the manner in which Nelson has dragged in American references is obvious and safe.

Although it's ostensibly an Italian subject, the play has been given emphatic contemporary American application by adaptor Richard Nelson, whose version includes some hilarious speeches for the masquerading hero about current U.S. politics.

There are references to the Great Communicator's belief that trees pollute the air and to his habit of sleeping in cabinet meetings ... Not all of these jokes take wing, but it is somewhat refreshing on Broadway to hear political subjects mentioned at all.[35]

Despite the ongoing need for relevant revision, *We Won't Pay, Accidental Death,* and *About Face* are, thanks to multiple American productions, "here to stay." These three plays appear to have graduated from the stage of "experimental" or "alternative" theatre and, will, I believe, be accepted as an integral part of contemporary international repertory desirable in American theatre schedules. Fo has in essence, during the period 1979–1988, established a base, a modest body of dramatic literature which is recognized by the collective American theatre mind.

This base of three dramatic works realistically represents Fo's social and political concerns while at the same time appropriately casting him as a writer of comedy and satire. In *We Won't Pay*, the richess of which as a drama has been competently described in this journal,[36] the grave social question of economic ineptitude on a national scale is lampooned by the madcap manner in which Mr. everyman worker and Mrs. everywoman wife deal with insufficient salaries and inflationary prices. The hilarity of the piece is caught in the unforgettable image of women leaving the supermarket with goods they have refused to pay for and which they eventually transport as unborn "babies" beneath their coats.

In *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* the frightening specter of institutional "justice" applied to an innocent victim is raised to the high art of grisly grotesque as an actual case becomes the focus of farce. Real-life anarchist Giuseppe Pinelli was arrested in late 1969, erroneously accused of having planted a bomb which killed sixteen people in a Milan bank, and "fell" to his death from a window of the Milan police station. The Fool of Fo's play portrays a mad graduate of many an asylum who arrives to interrogate police hierarchy about this scandal, who stays to re-enact Pinelli's "fall,"

and who seems to re-appear once again before the horrified police personnel.

In *About Face* the limitations of both management and underdog perspectives on life and love are broadly satirized by a series of fabulous switches of fate. Caricatured Fiat magnate, Gianni Agnelli, becomes, thanks to an auto accident, amnesia, and the wrong plastic surgery, a factory worker in his own plant. He is eventually "exchanged" out of this humdrum existence by both the return of his memory and the co-operation of government officials to whom he writes threatening letters.

In the first two plays the principal key, both to socio-political bite and to hilarity, is the mistaken identity of the protagonist. In *Accidental Death* police officials on stage labor under the delusion that a bureau inspector is creating havoc in their midst, while we in the audience know that a mad, self-styled investigator come from a paradise where real justice reigns is loose on the boards. In *About Face* some characters work to improve the health of someone they take for an injured factory worker, while others discover and then protect the Agnelli identity behind the surgically applied incognito. In *We Won't Pay* a series of chaotic misunderstandings pave a double-edged path to social criticism and to side-splitting laughter. In an amazing scene from Act II, the police lieutenant casing the protagonist's flat searches the "pregnant" women he finds there; he is rewarded by imagined blindness when they tell him about a pregnant saint's husband who lost his sight and when, coincidentally, the long-unpaid-for electric lights suddenly dim.

When each play's ruse has been stretched to the most insane absurdity imaginable, Fo snaps us back to epic disengagement, usually through a long-winded speech delivered by a leading character which jars us into remembering a current political problem. In *About Face,* for example, Antonio/Agnelli offers a final diatribe about the power of the state equalling the power of money and caps it with, "So Aldo Moro gets 15 bullets in his gut to protect me."[37] And from the seemingly safe shores of such "reality," we laugh madly at the horrific foibles of human society.

As suggested at the start of this essay, Fo's performance style is reminiscent of Totò and of Eduardo. While the contours of his double life as actor and internationally acclaimed playwright also recall Eduardo's career, Fo's playwriting evokes the works of two other countrymen, one of the Roman era and the other of ours. His consistent reliance upon the dramaturgical misreading of the who and the what harkens back to those comedies of Plautus from whose brilliant feats of mistaken identity and misunderstanding Shakespeare was to borrow liberally. It is also relevant to point out the common fixation about identity which Fo shares with Luigi Pirandello, whose characters' tortured peregrinations lead us finally to learn only that neither we nor they are certain of who they are. When questioned by a Harvard student as to whether Pirandello had influenced him, Fo replied: "Pirandello and I deal with the same themes [illusion and reality] but I'm an optimist."[38]

In considering Fo's impact on theatre in the United States, it seems that two developments are taking place, the direction of which, attributable to a variety of forces, is surely Foian. The first is a new awareness, for us, that the actor need not necessarily put his own ideas aside or neglect to have ideas of his own. During his and Franca's London workshop of May 1983, Fo asserted:

> In my opinion it is more important for actors to learn to invent roles for themselves ... to learn to be authors ... *all* actors should do this. In my opinion, the most important criterion for any school of drama is that is should teach its actors to be authors. They must learn how to develop situations.[39]

A *New York Times* issue chosen at random in January 1988 describes the Actors Studio search for a new direction which will include "a mandate to revive the Actors Studio's Playwright-Director's Unit and integrate its work with that of the actors." After more than fifty years of proclaiming the primacy of the actor's individual self-expression, the American citadel of "the method" has come to recognize, for instructional purposes at least, the natural relationship between acting and playwriting. The same issue of the *Times* includes Mel Gussow's enthusiastic review of the American Place Theatre's *Roy Blount's Happy Hour and a Half*: "For 90 minutes we are, figuratively, at a bar with the author and raconteur as he expounds wittily on his shaggy life and his and our hard times."[40]

American actors who author and American authors who act have been aided and abetted by a rich backdrop of vaudeville history and its subsequent chapters in television and radio shows. More recent sources of inspiration have been our own inventive brand of improvisational group theatre (beginning with Chicago's original Second City company in the early sixties and for two decades receiving multiple resurrections around the country) and our new brand of solo, mimetic clowning (the work of the West Coast's "New Vaudevillians" in the eighties). It is fascinating, in this latter connection, to note a clear example of Fo's direct influence. The actor Geoff Hoyle, who played the lead in the 1984 San Francisco Eureka Theatre production of *Accidental Death,* was subsequently invited to play the lead in the 1987 ART production of *Archangels Don't Play Pinball* directed by Fo. During my interviewing in Cambridge, two actors made mention of Fo's considerable influence on Hoyle. Later the same summer, *New York Times* reviewer Jennifer Dunning offered accolades to Hoyle for his part in the "New Vaudevillian" *Serious Fun!* Festival at Lincoln Center.[41]

The second development in contemporary American theatre which reflects a Foian flavor is our renewed awareness of a need for theatre which speaks frequently to social and political concerns. The Eureka Theatre Company mentioned above has produced four of Fo's plays to date and has recently been awarded a substantial federal grant specifically earmarked to develop new American plays dedicated to social concerns.[42] The recent outpouring of

powerful political theatre from South Africa, the growing awareness of the impact of the AIDS epidemic around the world, the fear of nuclear holocaust shared by all nations have brought to the American theatre a new sense of urgency about the subject matter of our plays. Examining our own psyches is no longer enough.[43]

On the broad canvas of world theatre, Dario Fo's mark is visible. He has chosen to place his enormous talents at the service of everyman and everywoman, making it plain that those who have no power are his concern. He supports the have-nots by using the theatre as a forum for paring the powerful down to size. His arms are those available to the economically and politically powerless: physical agility and intellectual wit. In Fo's version of stage reality, presidents and popes are adroitly relieved of prestige and power as ordinary people become aware of their own potential. Fo synthesizes past, present, and future concerns of society as he weds an appreciative sense of tradition with satirical but hilarious situations in which bureaucratic bunglings of immense proportions victimize the common people.

To a student in London who asked him if theatre could change the world, Fo responded: "I believe that neither theatre, nor any form of art, can, in itself, change anything ... Not even great art."[44] But Dario Fo is a performance artist and a playwright whose comically costumed message, *beware institutional power,* has been heard around the world. Both his comedy and his message are nourishing our theatre today.

NOTES

1 "Dario Fo: Andiamo a Ridere," *A.R.T. News,* 7, 4 (May 1987), 6.
2 Joel Schechter, *Durov's Pig* (New York, 1985), p. 142.
3 Ron Jenkins, "Clowns, Politics and Miracles," *American Theatre,* 3, 3 (1986), 12.
4 *Dario Fo and Franca Rame: Theatre Workshops at Riverside Studios, London,* (London, 1983), pp. 23–26.
5 Dario Fo, "Toto: The Violence of the Marionette and the Mask," *Theater,* XVIII, 3 (1987), 8.
6 A. Richard Sogliuzzo, "Dario Fo: Puppets for Proletarian Revolution," *The Drama Review,* 16, (1972), 75–77.
7 Fo, *Theater,* 10.
8 Eric Bentley, *In Search of Theater* (New York, 1953), p. 274.
9 Bentley, pp. 274–275.
10 When I observed Eduardo perform in Rome in 1970 and in Naples in 1971, I was particularly impressed with what, at the time, I described as "polish": Mimi D'Aponte, "Encounters with Eduardo De Filippo," *Modern Drama,* 16 (1973), 351.
11 *Fo and Rame: Workshops,* p. 41.
12 *Fo and Rame: Workshops,* p. 8.

13 *Fo and Rame: Workshops,* p. 6. During this session, Fo goes on to explain that Brecht had to invent a mechanical method of detachment, since, as he himself stated, there existed no tradition of popular theatre in German theatre.
14 Bentley, p. 275.
15 Bentley, p. 268.
16 Suzanne Cowan, introduction, *Orgasmo Adulto Escapes from the Zoo,* by Franca Rame & Dario Fo (New York, 1985), p. vii.
17 Mimi D'Aponte, "Eduardo De Filippo: *Three Plays,*" *Italica,* 55(1978), 283.
18 See Tony Mitchell, *Dario Fo: People's Court Jester* (London, 1984) pp. 59–62.
19 Mitchell, *Dario Fo,* p. 95.
20 Ron Jenkins, "Team Playing," *The Boston Globe Magazine,* 27 April 1986, p. 64.
21 "Dario Fo mesmerizes in 'Misterio Buffo'," *The Boston Globe,* 2 May 1986, p. 44.
22 Mimi D'Aponte, "Improvisational Notes," *Commonweal,* 113 (1986), 503.
23 Mel Gussow, "Dario Fo's 'Mistero Buffo,' a One-Man Show," *The New York Times,* 29 May 1986, p. C20.
24 In Cambridge I observed Fo help move scenery, as well as sing along with his cast for an album recording: I was also regaled with a first-hand account of how, when directing someone at odds with his part, Fo kissed the hand of that overly tense actor to demonstrate the approach he was looking for.
25 Peter Gerety, Interview at American Repertory Theatre, Cambridge, 27 May 1987.
26 John Bottoms, Interview at ART, Cambridge, 27 May 1987.
27 Robert Scanlon, Interview at ART, Cambridge, 27 May 1987.
28 *Fo and Rame: Workshops,* p. 22.
29 Dario Fo, Interview in Cambridge, 26 May 1987.
30 Pirandello was a spokesman for this traditional attitude in Italian theatre. In an essay entitled "Illustratori, attori e traduttori" he declares that illustrators, actors and translators are merely interpreters of the playwright's original creative work.
31 Fo, Interview.
32 Fo, Interview. Fo is consistent in his teaching. These remarks reflect the same line of reasoning offered his students in London in 1983 when he said, "The ideal situation would be for the pieces that you have acted out to be written down, transcribed as dialogue, given back to you, and then used as the basis for fresh improvisation. And so on, as a continuing process." *Fo and Rame: Workshops,* p. 34.
33 Dario Fo, *Accidental Death of an Anarchist,* adapted by Richard Nelson (New York, 1987), p. 6.
34 Ron Jenkins, "Translator's Preface," *Almost By Chance a Woman: Elizabeth,* by Dario Fo, *Theater,* XVIII, No. 3 (1987), 64–65.
35 John Simon, *New York,* 26 November 1984, p. 76; *Variety,* 21 November 1984, p. 140; Robert Brustein, "Exploding an Anarchist Play," *The New Republic,* 17 December 1984, p. 26.
36 Martin W. Walsh, "The Proletarian Carnival of Fo's *Non si paga! Non si paga!,*" *Modern Drama,* 28, (1985), 211–222.

37 See note 13 above; Dario Fo, *About Face*, trans. by Dale McAdoo and Charles Mann, *Theater*, 14, 3 (1983), 40.

38 "Dario Fo: Andiamo a Ridere," *A.R.T. News*, 7, 4 (1987), 1.

39 *Fo and Rame: Workshops*, p. 40.

40 Jeremy Gerard, "Actors Studio, Long in Turmoil, Seeks a New Artistic Director," *The New Times*, 26 January 1988, p. C15; Mel Gussow, "Stage: Roy Blount in Humorists' Series," *The New York Times*, 26 January 1988, p. C17.

41 Gerety and Bottoms, Interviews; Jennifer Dunning, "Stage: New Vaudevillians at Serious Fun! Festival," *The New York Times*, 4 August 1987, p. C16.

42 Telephone interview with Richard Seyd, Associate Producing Director for the Eureka Theatre Company, January 1988.

43 Before going on to the Cambridge walk/interview, I was invited to the Fo-Rame apartment to visit and eat with other guests: a translator/writer from the area, a director from Portland, Maine, and a second director from Sofia, Bulgaria. Throughout the two hours of conversation Franca continued to work at the large living room table on the sub-titles for an up-coming San Francisco opening of *Open Couple*. Dario came back and forth from the kitchen where he was cooking spaghetti. The scene seems, in retrospect, a marvelous metaphor for the international stature of Dario Fo's popular theatre: New England, New York, Italy, and Bulgaria were sharing an improvised meal in the midst of which work for a play on the West Coast went on.

44 *Fo and Rame: Workshops*, p. 42.