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**Playful Rebellion: The Anarchic Clown and Pushing the Boundaries of Contemporary
Theatre**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts
at Virginia Commonwealth University

by

William Browning,
Master of Fine Arts at
Virginia Commonwealth University,
August 2022

Director: Jesse Njus, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Theatre Department

Virginia Commonwealth University
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Abstract

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Major Director: Jess Njus Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Theatre
Theatre Department

In the many decades since live theatre began certain rules, conventions, and norms took hold. These conventions would change over the years but as these customs were formed there were always those who pushed back against the hegemony. There were always figures, people, and organizations that rebelled against the status quo and wished to push the boundaries of the theatre. This is where the anarchic clown enters the fray. Those who wish to push the boundaries of theatre have existed since its creation, but the anarchic clown is a specific form of rebel. The anarchic clown wishes to break the conventions of theatre in specific ways. The clown wishes to change the theatre by rebelling against authority figures that strive to keep the theatre stagnant. The anarchic clown aligns itself with downtrodden and minority groups, to advance the types of theatre that are often overlooked. The anarchic clown is malleable. It can take the form of person, animal, mythical creature, or any form that fits its ideals. At its core, the anarchic clown is a trickster, and an outsider. It is this outsider mindset that allows the anarchic clown to avoid falling into tropes or contemporary theatrical conventions. Although the anarchic clown can fit many molds, the two greatest examples are Italian artist, Dario Fo, and French

artist, Alfred Jarry. Jarry represents the birth of the anarchic clown while Dario Fo is the ideal most recent version. While Jarry represents the beginning and Dario the best since, we must also look to the future and where the anarchic clown can continue to grow. This thesis is not a study on the history of clowning. I am focused on the metatheatrical figure created by Alfred Jarry in his Ubu plays, a figure expanded on by Dario Fo. The figure of Ubu is taken from the history of clowning but Jarry separates him from that history and uses him to deconstruct theatrical conventions. All clowns speak truth to power, but Jarry's Ubu exploded the rules of theatre and art, giving rise to twentieth-century genres like Theatre of the Absurd and its descendants. In this thesis, I focus on the metatheatrical possibilities of this figure—a metatheatrical anarchic clown—to help deconstruct artistic conventions and theatrical authority figures like Shakespeare. I also want to suggest that this metatheatrical anarchic clown might be a helpful entry point into canonical plays for students and others who have been excluded by western theatrical conventions.

Chapter One: Introduction

The figure I am calling the anarchic clown was not born out of thin air. The figure was created by the French artist, Alfred Jarry. Jarry shares some characteristics with the anarchic clown, but the true prototype is Jarry's theatrical monstrosity, Ubu. Ubu represents chaos and anarchy in its purest forms. He aims to subvert and overturn authoritative structures at every turn, no matter the fallout. Ubu wishes to break theatrical convention in every way possible, even if it enrages the audience. Ubu is grotesque to the point of almost revulsion. This form of anarchic clown is almost more harmful than helpful to the theatre at times. However, without this jumping off point we could not arrive at the more refined anarchic clown of Dario Fo's. We must appreciate Ubu for all his vulgarity and violence. Ubu was not the perfect anarchic clown, but in December of 1896 Alfred Jarry showed us where to start.

Breaking the fourth wall is crucial to the anarchic clown on numerous levels. The primary motives lie in breaking the norms of conventional theatre and establishing a relationship with the audience. The anarchic clown wishes to push theatre forward by breaking conventions that keep storytelling stagnant. The fourth wall eliminates a plethora of possibilities in the theatre. The absence of the fourth wall allows for interaction with the theatre's most important members, the audience. With the fourth wall in place, the audience has no choice but to sit quietly and pretend they are peering into the scene through a cracked window. This convention limits the possibilities of dynamic art and whenever the fourth wall is removed it creates interaction and energy, which the anarchic clown craves.

The grotesque is a key element to the anarchic clown. Dario Fo and Jarry both utilize grotesque elements as key parts of their theatre. The anarchic clown often uses the grotesque for physical comedy, which is often the case with clowns. The anarchic clown also uses the

grotesque to highlight social and political ills. Perhaps most importantly of all, the anarchic clown uses the grotesque to break theatrical convention.

The anarchic clown is inherently a feminist. The anarchic clown is an ally to all marginalized people and groups. This does mean the anarchic clown cares for women any more than other marginalized groups. Women are important to mention in this instance because Dario Fo and his wife, Franca Rame, created important feminist works and did so with the spirit of the anarchic clown. Fo and Rame pushed gender norms, empowered women with leading roles, and highlighted issues affecting women in their pieces. Fo and Rame did not invent the wheel with their feminist works but they put an anarchic clown's twist on it.

Jarry and Fo accomplished much during their time with the anarchic clown. However, progress must always continue so we ask where to go next? To move forward we must adapt. Adaptation is the next step for the anarchic clown. Now that we know what the anarchic clown is and what it wants to accomplish, we can use it to adapt other works. Handspring Puppet Company created a fantastic adaptation of *Ubu*, set in Post-Apartheid South Africa. Adaptation allows the anarchic clown malleability. The clown does not have to take the form of a once in a generation Italian artist or a destructive force that only sews chaos. This malleability allows the clown figure to be utilized no matter its form if it fits the ethos of pushing the theatre forward.

The next step in the anarchic clown's journey is the classroom. The anarchic clown is a tool that can be used by educators to create a more inclusive classroom. The anarchic clown can be used to help students understand classical works, champion lesser-known works, and create a better learning environment. The classroom is the arena in which the clown has the most room to grow. There are so many brilliant educators in this world that can use the anarchic clown in ways still unknown. In the hands of educators, the anarchic clown can go wherever it wants.

Because the anarchic clown so highly values its audience, it is essential to discuss how the clown views it and what actions it expects of them. Alfred Jarry's anarchic clown wished to shock and jolt its audience into a frenzy. Jarry saw his audience as a repulsive collective and wished to highlight humanity's universal flaws. Dario Fo wished to tackle sociopolitical flaws within society and Italian culture. Fo required many of his audiences to hold a cultural or collective memory to hear the true message of his works. The final form of the anarchic clown understands that the audience and scholarship around it have evolved since Jarry and Fo's time. The contemporary anarchic clown sees the audience as emancipated spectators. The idea of the emancipated spectator was championed by French philosopher, Jacques Rancière. This concept highlights the audience members as a collection of individuals with their own previous knowledge, cultural backgrounds, and idiosyncrasies. The emancipated spectator idea dismisses the notion of the entire audience uniformly agreeing with the anarchic clown's message. Therefore, the contemporary anarchic clown does not have specific expectations for its audience because the anarchic clown could never predict the responses of such a varied and unique modern audience. The anarchic clown wishes to start a conversation with the audience through performance, even if it does not know what its audience will say. So long as the anarchic clown has successfully pushed the boundaries of theatre in its own way, the audience is free to draw any conclusions it likes. The anarchic clown simply wishes to start the fire. It is up to the audience as to how much they fan the flame.

Chapter Two: The Prototype Clown

The prototype of the anarchic clown was born in Paris near the end of the nineteenth century. This prototype was created by the artist, Alfred Jarry. Alfred Jarry is a seminal figure in the avant-garde theatre. Scholars have called him the father of absurdism. The influential French theatre artist, Antonin Artaud, named his theatre after Jarry. The majority of Jarry's fame stemmed from the creation of one polarizing theatrical figure. This infamous character was none other than Ubu. Ubu is the ultimate rebellion through paradox. Ubu represents a figure that is dissatisfied with the status quo and wishes to turn it upside down. However, once Ubu flips the script of his circumstances, he does not restore order or improve upon the previous circumstances. Ubu simply replaces the chaos of the old regime with his own. Ubu does not necessarily create a better world, just a different one. Therefore, Ubu represents the anarchic clown in its primal form. This version of the anarchic clown does not wish to better the world in any significant way, only to tear down the old world. Although the old world must always be torn down for the new, Ubu does not care if the new world is better than the old. Ubu is the ultimate rebellion through paradox. He is jester and king, police and anarchist, bumbling fool and maniacal genius. He is designed to provoke, no matter which side you are on or what you believe. Ubu is a bomb meant to destroy all in its path. Jarry accomplished this goal by creating a play so controversial that it caused a riot on its opening night. While it is certainly the goal of the anarchic clown to tear down old systems and practices but to what end? Ubu took the vital first steps of the anarchic clown but like all prototypes, must be improved upon. Until that improvement arrived, the theatre world was left no other choice but to embrace the chaos.

Merdre! This iconic French obscenity echoed throughout the streets of Paris on December 10, 1896. This date was the premiere of the infamous play, *Ubu Roi*, by Alfred Jarry.

‘Merdre!’ is the opening line of the play and it is shouted by the titular character, Pere Ubu. Pere Ubu is a perfect example of the anarchic clown. In many ways Jarry created the anarchic clown with his monstrous Ubu character. One trait that the Anarchic Clown, Pere Ubu, and Alfred Jarry hold in common is their subversion of authority. Pere Ubu subverts authority at every turn in *Ubu Roi*. The play opens with a murder conspiracy plot hatched by Pere Ubu’s wife, Mere Ubu. There is perhaps no greater subversion of authority than planning to overthrow the king, kill all his heirs, and take his place upon the throne. Pere Ubu strikes again with his subversion of authority in the second scene of Act One. In this scene, Pere Ubu is attempting to gather supporters for his planned coup. Just before Ubu and his supporters sit down for dinner he comes back from the bathroom holding a toilet brush like a king’s scepter. He tosses it onto the table and demands his guests give it a taste. The acolytes that give the toilet brush a taste keel over, poisoned. Ubu’s use of a toilet brush as his scepter is a clear mockery of the king. Jarry made Ubu the king of excrement who poisons those that are loyal to him. It is no secret how Jarry feels about the throne and authority. Jarry portrays an even more damning example of authority once Ubu usurps the throne. In Act Two, Scene Five, Ubu has just seized the throne and is lounging about the King’s palace. Mere Ubu and Pere Ubu’s head general, Captain Sexcrement, attempt to counsel Pere Ubu on how to run his new kingdom. They warn Pere Ubu that he must give the people food and gold to keep them complacent. At first Pere Ubu resists their counsel and wishes to greedily keep the spoils for himself:

SEXCREMENT. But, Pa Ubu, if you don’t give handouts the people won’t want to pay their taxes.

PA UBU. Is that a fact?

MA UBU. Yes, yes!

PA UBU. Oh, in that case I agree to everything. Scrabble together three million, barbecue one hundred fifty steers and sheep. As long as I get my share! (Jarry 22)

Pere Ubu is a selfish and greedy ruler who only agrees to provide for his citizens once he realizes they will not pay his taxes without food and gold to survive. Ubu's final line epitomizes his avarice. He does not care whether his citizens live or die, only that they pay his taxes.

Jarry mocks the crown again in the opening scene of Act Three. This scene takes place in the palace between Pere and Mere Ubu. This scene satirizes the stubbornness and ruthlessness of the crown. Not long after Ubu has seized power, he decides to betray the captain of his army who helped him take the throne in the first place. Ubu also dismisses the threat of young Buggerlas. Buggerlas is the only remaining heir to the original king and already displayed his skill with a sword to Ubu earlier in the play. Mere Ubu attempts to talk sense into her husband. She warns Ubu not to betray Sexcrement or underestimate Buggerlas but to no avail. Pere Ubu is so concerned with his own greed and power that it blinds him to the obvious threats facing him. Instead of heeding her advice, Pere Ubu doubles down on his idiocy:

PERE UBU. Ah, crap! Isn't wrong worth the same as right? Ha! You're insulting me, Ma Ubu, and I'm going to cut you to pieces.

Instead of listening to Mere Ubu's brilliant advice, Pere Ubu ignores it and chases his wife out of the room like a cartoon cat chasing a mouse. Jarry takes another swipe at the ineptitude of the crown in this scene. Jarry portrayed the ways monarchs repeatedly tripped over their own shoelaces while running a kingdom, instead of heeding their wise advisors.

Perhaps Jarry's greatest subversion of authority comes in Act Three, Scene Two. In a matter of one scene, Pere Ubu dispatches with all forms of authority remaining in his world. He begins with the Nobles. One by one Ubu takes all land, titles, and finances from the Nobles.

Once they have been relieved of their material possessions, Ubu condemns them to a brutal death. Next, he dispatches the lawmakers in this land. Ubu attempts to reform the justice system to fit his avarice aims and when the judges resist, they too are killed. Finally, Ubu destroys the previous financial system and replaces it with a ludicrous one of his own in which you must pay ridiculously high taxes solely to him. When the previous leaders of the financial system resist, you guessed it, they are executed. In one fell swoop, Ubu obliterates most systems of authority in his fictional nation of Poland. The ruling classes are all thrown out and their systems of power with them. Their rules and systems are replaced by the all-encompassing chaos of Ubu. Jarry showed the many ways in which he felt authority was corrupted and broken in Paris. He saw the chaos of Ubu as preferable to the systems already in place. A frightening idea indeed.

Alfred Jarry shared great contempt for the theatrical conventions of his time. None represented theatrical convention more than the bard himself, William Shakespeare. Shakespeare's plays were undoubtedly relevant in Jarry's era, just as they are today. However, Jarry clearly grew tired of Shakespeare as he parodies some of his best-known plays within *Ubu Roi*. *Ubu Roi*'s plot structure is a clear parody of *Macbeth*. Many of the same beats are hit within both stories, beginning with the opening scene in which Mere Ubu attempts to convince her husband to murder the king. Ubu is also defeated by the young Buggerlas in battle later in the play, just as *Macbeth* is defeated in battle by *MacDuff*. The main difference between the two plays is Ubu's escape. *Macbeth* and his wife meet their fates as recompense for their murderous treason while Ubu slips away in the chaos of battle. *Hamlet* is another masterpiece parodied by Jarry within *Ubu Roi*. Act Two, Scene Four contains the most direct *Hamlet* reference. At this point, Buggerlas and his mother are the only living members of the former regime and attempt to take shelter in a cave. Near the end of the scene the Queen dies, leaving Buggerlas alone. He is

only alone briefly until the ghosts of his entire family appear in the cave. The ancestors give Buggerlas "...a big sword" (Jarry 23) and charge him with avenging their family. This scene is a grotesque parody of Hamlet's moment with the ghost of his father. Hamlet's father urges him to seek revenge against Claudius for his murder, just as Buggerlas's ancestors spur him on to revenge. A final parody of Shakespeare comes from Jarry's use of a bear. Shakespeare's *Winter's Tale* is well known for the stage direction occurring at the end of Act Three, 'Exit, Pursued by a bear'. This inexplicable stage direction perhaps amused Jarry as he inserts a bear into *Ubu Roi* for seemingly no reason. Ubu and two of his followers are hiding in a cave when a bear attacks the group, seemingly out of nowhere. This scene is another opportunity to show Pere Ubu's cowardice as he hides on the safety of a boulder and prays while his comrades fight the bear. Once the fight is over Ubu takes credit for their victory due to his pious prayers. The bear is yet another way for Jarry to poke fun at Shakespeare and the unending popularity of his work.

Jarry showed a clear interest in subverting conventional language through Ubu. He wished to heighten the importance of gesture while giving his language a grotesque twist. The opening line of *Ubu Roi* is a provocative and grotesque twist on a French expletive. The word itself is already a swear in French culture but Jarry pushes it further by adding an additional letter. Jarry uses this distorted expletive to begin his play and his characters repeat it throughout the play. In a 1977 English translation by David Copelin, he translated the word to "sheeyit". This was Jarry's attempt to thumb his nose at conventional language in the theatre, which he found contrived and uninteresting. Jarry was exhausted with the comedy of manners form of realism theatre. Jarry replaced the sweeping elegant monologues with repeated grotesque phrases such as, "by my green snot!" "Phynances" was another grotesque twist of a word when

referring to monetary issues in this world. These subversions of language may seem minor, but they are paper cuts that add up to a laceration of theatrical convention. The language of the piece constantly carries a sense of irreverence. The opening scene sets the table well for what audiences could expect. The opening exchange between Pere and Mere Ubu informs the audience right away that they will not see a normal example of language in the theatre:

PERE UBU. Sheeyit!

MERE UBU. Oh! That's lovely, Pa Ubu. You are a great big gangster.

PERE UBU. Why don't I bash your brains in, Mere Ubu!

MERE UBU. It's somebody else you should murder, Pere Ubu, not me!

PERE UBU. In the name of my green snot, I don't understand.

MERE UBU. So, Pere Ubu, you are happy with your destiny?

PERE UBU. In the name of my green snot, sheeyit, milady, certainly I'm happy...

(Jarry 1)

“In the name of my green snot” and “sheeyit” are uttered twice in the opening eight lines of *Ubu Roi*. These words and phrases would arise constantly within *Ubu Roi*. Jarry used grotesque language to continuously jolt the audience throughout the performance. Jarry wished to keep audience members uncomfortable with crude and unconventional language. Another example of this irreverence comes in Act Three, Scene Five. Captain Sexcrement has travelled to Russia to gain their support in a war against Ubu. Sexcrement speaks to the czar of Russia along with the members of his court. Many plays of this time would portray the leader of Russia as dignified and well spoken. However, at times he sounds like a teenage boy:

SEXCREMENT. Sire, forgive me. I was forced in spite of myself by Pa Ubu.

CZAR. Oh! You frightful liar! Well, what do you want?

...

SEXCREMENT. I Commanded the Fifth Regiment of the Vilna dragoons under Wenceslas and a whole company in the service of Pa Ubu.

CZAR. That's fine. I name you sub-lieutenant in the Tenth Regime of Cossacks, and watch you don't betray us. If you fight well, you'll be rewarded.

SEXCREMENT. I am not lacking in courage, sire.

CZAR. Okay, beat it. (Jarry 33-34)

The leader of a nation would not often be portrayed using this type of informal, crude language. This rebellious tone exists throughout *Ubu Roi*.

Alfred Jarry was fascinated with the grotesque for the entirety of his theatrical life. He created one of the more grotesque figures in his era. The monstrosity Jarry released upon the stage in 1896 was none other than Ubu. A major factor in Ubu's staying power was its extreme grotesqueness. Ubu had a humongous round belly with a swirl like a bullseye centered on it. He has a pointed head, as if wearing a permanent dunce cap. "These remarks clearly show that Ubu is to look as little like a human as possible. He is in fact a walking bestiary, a concrete image of the instinctual or libidinal parts of men." (Spingler 5) He is cowardly, greedy, childish, violent, and vulgar in every way possible. Jarry stated that he wished Ubu to be a mirror to the audience, reflecting all their grotesqueness back at them. Jarry wanted to show the audience their bestial nature through Ubu. After the 1896 debut Jarry said, "the depraved man sees himself with the horns of a bull and the body of a dragon, according to the exaggeration of his vices." (Spingler 1) Ubu was an exaggeration of all the vices and atrocities that Jarry observed in humanity. The Pa Ubu character was infamously inspired by Jarry's physics teacher. Jarry exaggerated and twisted his former teacher's likeness into the vile Ubu.

Jarry wished to distort several different figures through Ubu in his time. One figure was the grand actor of the era. Actors at this time were great stars that could sometimes overshadow the director, playwright, or the piece itself. Audiences would attend the theatre in some instances just to see the actor perform, rather than observe the entire spectacle of theatre. Jarry wished to push back against the notion of the grand actor with Pa Ubu. Jarry intended for Pa Ubu to distort the idea of the modern performer in several ways. Jarry stated that actors in *Ubu Roi* should look and behave like puppets in their roles. (Spingler 3) This specific style would remove any personal or unique movements of the actor. According to Jarry, Pa Ubu should always have these puppet-like movements no matter which actor plays him. By minimalizing the individuality of the actor through these puppet-like movements, Pa Ubu becomes universal. Ubu can then be played by multiple actors and retain his consistent movement style. “Jarry’s intention was to diminish the actor’s human presence, especially his personality, by converting him into a puppet hybrid.” (Spingler 3). Jarry wished to create a sense of alienation with his actors. Jarry did not wish for audiences to see a famous actor pouring their idiosyncrasies into the Pere Ubu character. Jarry wanted a universal Ubu that would be played the same, no matter the actor that inhabits the role. This speaks to Jarry’s original intention of Ubu as a puppet play. Jarry saw his actors as marionettes to present the character of Ubu, rather than inhabit Ubu themselves.

The theatrical bomb of Ubu set off by Alfred Jarry became a seed for avant-garde art across the world. The anarchic clown was born alongside Ubu on that infamous Parisian night. Although the anarchic clown was in its most primitive form, its birth signifies a vital moment in theatrical history. Ubu and Jarry helped the anarchic clown crawl, so Dario Fo and Franca Rame could teach it to walk, until finally it could run on its own. Ubu gave the anarchic clown several

gifts. The first gift was chaos. Ubu brings chaos to every situation and the anarchic clown is certainly an agent of chaos. However, Ubu brings unmitigated chaos which can sometimes cause more problems than it solves. Although chaos is a vital element in the anarchic clown's toolbox, it must be controlled chaos to create meaningful change in the theatre. Another key element passed on from Ubu to the anarchic clown is the grotesque. Ubu is grotesque in a myriad of ways. His appearance, language, motives, and disposition are all grotesque. Although the final form of the anarchic clown is not nearly as grotesque as Ubu, the grotesqueness remains and is vital. The anarchic clown is an outsider who wishes to subvert convention. Therefore, it must contain some element of grotesquery. It does not require an obvious grotesque element such as a hideous appearance or crude language. It could be as simple as a small scar on the cheek or a stutter. Ubu's grotesqueness is extreme and overwhelming but without it the anarchic clown would be incomplete. The anarchic clown needs its grotesqueness to keep its outsider status. Perhaps the most important aspect of Ubu passed on to the anarchic clown is the subversion of contemporary theatrical practices. Ubu was created in response to what Alfred Jarry deemed a stagnant contemporary theatre. Jarry satirizes the popular theatre of the time at every turn.

Chapter Three: Obliterating the Fourth Wall

The fourth wall is a way to contain a theatre piece within certain parameters. There are rules that the audience and those on stage agree to follow when in the theatre. One of the most important rules regarding the fourth wall is the agreement that the audience and those on stage are separated by an invisible barrier. This barrier is designed to prevent any performers from the awareness that they are in a play or being watched by an audience. For the audience to hold up their end of the fourth wall bargain they must adopt a voyeuristic point of view. The fourth wall convention became popular with the rise of the realism genre of theatre. Realism placed a stranglehold on the theatre starting at the end of the nineteenth century and continues to reign as a dominant form of storytelling. The anarchic clown has no interest in barriers between performer and spectator. The anarchic clown wishes to break down these walls to create a more inclusive experience for all. The fourth wall holds a variety of different uses but to the anarchic clown it represents stagnation. It epitomizes the lack of progress made in storytelling within a medium that has existed for thousands of years. Breaking the fourth wall is a tactic to subvert a dominant form of storytelling to push the medium forward. Breaking convention is the best way to stay on the cutting edge of any area and the anarchic clown wishes to push this boundary in a variety of ways. An artist who thrived on breaking the fourth wall and subverting authority was Dario Fo. Dario Fo breaks the fourth wall in ways that align well with the anarchic clown, and he became known for such acts over the span of his theatrical career.

One of Fo's greatest subversions of theatrical practice was his constant breaking of the fourth wall. Breaking the fourth wall allows the performer to create a relationship with the audience. Realism never allows for breaking of the fourth wall and relies on a voyeuristic point of view for the audience. Due to the overwhelming popularity of realism in Dario's era, his

constant shattering of the fourth wall made him quite the anarchist in the theatrical world. One of Fo's most utilized methods of breaking the fourth wall was through his prologues. Fo used his prologues to give context to his pieces. Fo believed that the theatre should exist as a living newspaper to inform the people on important issues of the moment. His prologues set the scene, and sometimes gave vital information necessary to understanding the piece. In Fo's mistaken identity comedy, *About Face*, the fourth wall is broken immediately at the start of the prologue. The actor playing Antonio comes out and speaks directly to the audience. The actor walks onto stage completely out of character and explains the circumstances leading up to the play. Because *About Face* is a fast-paced mistaken identity comedy, a brief explanation of the circumstances before the zaniness begins is useful. The prologue also accomplishes an essential goal of Fo's, to establish a relationship with the audience. Fo's prologues are often monologues by a single character. In the instance of *About Face* the prologue contains an entire scene between two characters. It establishes rapport between Lucia, Antonio, and the audience. Antonio explains the car crash that got him into his predicament, informs the audience that the president of Fiat Car Company was disfigured in the accident, and President Agnelli was so badly injured that he was mistaken for Antonio at the crash site. Antonio also explains the circumstances surrounding his affair with Lucia, which is a vital plot point for the remainder of the play. Without this exposition the audience would be lost when Act One opens in the hospital. This allows Fo to get right into the slapstick comedy at the hospital instead of dealing with exposition or character introductions.

Fo can use his prologues to introduce exposition or begin to build his relationship with the audience, but his prologues are best known for their political commentary. Commenting on a current political situation is an overt destruction of the fourth wall. The fourth wall creates a

world on stage that is separate from our own. Dario wished to create a theatre in which the theatre and political world were combined. A perfect example of a political prologue from Fo was performed in the United States along with his piece, *Elizabeth: Almost by Chance a Woman*. In this prologue Fo included a biting critique of the United States and current president, Ronald Reagan. For many years Fo was barred from entering the United States to perform any of his pieces. His works were censored by the United States government and Ronald Reagan was president during the years of Fo's ban. Towards the end of his presidency Reagan finally allowed Fo to bring his works overseas. The monologue is delivered by the actor playing Big Mama. The character of Big Mama is a gender bent role in which a male actor plays the role of a female maid. The character itself breaks the fourth wall and Fo takes it a step further by having a character in drag deliver a speech critiquing the United States. The tone of the monologue is wry, and Fo delivers numerous backhanded compliments to the United States. Once Fo has finished critiquing United States foreign policy, he then moves on to specifically address Ronald Reagan. Fo included a letter that he mailed personally to Ronald Reagan and the actor playing Big Mama recites it in entirety. Fo's tone is somehow even more mocking in his letter to Reagan and he begins by addressing Reagan as his "Friend and Fellow Actor" (Fo 2). Fo proceeds to tear Reagan apart with an endless barrage of backhanded compliments. Fo mocks his foreign policy, his conservative ideas on gender roles, his previous acting career, and Reagan's notorious forgetfulness. His final barb includes the way Reagan's wife, Nancy, helps him make decisions:

THE ACTOR PLAYING BIG MAMA. I personally have been shocked by people who suggest that Nancy hides under the table at all your cabinet meetings to make your decisions for you: that she pulls on your right pant's leg when she wants you to say yes, on your left pant's leg when she wants you to say no, and that whenever there is a doubt

about the right answer she pulls on the middle, and that this was the origin of your prostate problems. Rumors like these are absurd, and I would never sink to using them in one of my plays...” (Fo 4)

This excerpt captures the essence of the entire prologue and Dario Fo’s theatre. This was likely not the original prologue written to accompany this piece and if it were performed somewhere other than The United States, there would be a different irreverent prologue poking fun at another political situation. Dario adapts his prologues to fit the place and time of the performance. This idea lends itself once again to Dario’s belief that theatre should be a living newspaper for the people. Dario’s prologues set the tone for his pieces and this prologue certainly accomplishes his goal of setting the audience up for an irreverent farce.

In a 1983 television adaptation of Fo’s *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, the voyeuristic viewpoint in this show is dismissed immediately. Although the piece was filmed, it was also performed live in front of a large audience. Within the first five minutes of the production, a character directly addresses the audience. This character, Bertozzo, looks directly into the camera and delivers one of Fo’s famous prologues. Fo’s prologues are another way to break the fourth wall and interact with the audience. Before the plot even begins to unfold, Fo wishes to establish a relationship with the audience. Once the prologue has been delivered, the inevitable madness of every Fo piece can ensue. The 1983 television adaptation does not include Fo in the cast, but his ethos is evident in the production. Fo’s spirit is channeled especially through the Maniac character, performed by Gavin Richards. Richards played The Maniac for a stage run in London of 1980 with an English adaptation by Gillian Hanna. Richards adapted the screenplay himself and played The Maniac for the televised stage production. Richards’ role of writer and lead performer fits quite well with Fo’s style of theatre making. The Maniac breaks the fourth

wall frequently and most among the cast. Within the first five minutes of the piece, *The Maniac* makes multiple quips and asides to the audience. In the first scene, *The Maniac* is questioned by policeman, Bertozzo. Bertozzo becomes quickly frustrated by *The Maniac*'s subversion of his interrogation and angrily shouts, "May we get on with this fucking statement?" Gavin Richards immediately exits character to look in the camera and mischievously chides Bertozzo for cursing on national television. This aside by Richards was particularly clever due to Fo's continuous censorship throughout his theatrical career. This form of meta commentary by Richards perfectly exemplifies Fo's artistic aims. Richards breaks the fourth wall, makes a political comment on censorship in the arts, and most importantly, delivers it with a snarky joke that elicits a roar of laughter from the audience. The Dario Fo trifecta.

In the 1980 London stage adaptation there was another humorous breaking of the fourth wall. Near the end of the play, Bertozzo becomes enraged at the continuous antics of *The Maniac* and turns his pistol on everyone in the room. One of the other policemen attempts to calm Bertozzo down and he responds, "You calm down. AGAINST THE FUCKING AUDIENCE (*To audience*) Sorry!" (Fo, 66) This moment breaks the fourth wall on multiple levels. Not only does Bertozzo acknowledge the fact that there is an audience but addresses them directly. He apologizes to the audience for putting them in harm's way by placing them in the line of fire. This action not only acknowledges the audience but brings them into the action. They are a part of the play and could easily be wounded if Bertozzo misfires.

Fo breaks the fourth wall to build a stronger relationship with his audience. He wishes to invite the audience into the story by directly speaking to and involving them in the action. Fo is not the only one who is adept at breaking the fourth wall. Fo's theatrical and life partner, Franca Rame, was brilliant at bringing the audience into the fold with her own breaking of the fourth

wall. Fo and Rame would often invite the audience into the show and their lives with their improvisational breaking of the fourth wall. *Elizabeth: Almost by Chance a Woman* is a tragicomic portrait of the Queen of England in which Rame played The Queen while Fo played the maidservant for its initial theatrical run. Fo and Rame frequently broke the fourth wall with improvised dialogue that added nuance and additional humor to the piece. In one moment, Rame is changing clothes behind a screen and Fo jokes that those in the balcony can see her naked. Rame notices her husband's improvisation going on too long and chastises Fo along with the character by firing back, "Stay in your place and try to be quiet, because now I'm the Queen, and for once, at last, you are the Servant." Fo responds with, "Dario Fo wrote this play, and he wouldn't like to see you treating me like this. One word from me and he'll cross out 'Queen' next to your lines and write in 'The Maid.'" Fo then steps completely out of character to address the audience more directly: "She's really been immersing herself in the role. At home she answers the telephone: 'Hello, this is the queen speaking.'" (Jenkins, 2001). In this short back and forth between Fo and Rame they both break the fourth wall on multiple levels. They do so initially to give the audience a glimpse into their theatrical and personal relationship. Rame found a rare moment in her theatrical career in which she was the character with power and Fo was the servant. Once Fo realized that Rame had the upper hand, he countered by brandishing his authorial power. Both characters broke the fourth wall but never left character. It is not until Fo steps completely out of character to address the audience does the back and forth finally cease. This back and forth is the perfect example of Fo and Rame's unique anarchic clown. In the short span of improvised dialogue, the audience is informed that Fo is often cast as the lead or titular character in past productions of Rame and Fo's. We also learn that it is Fo who often writes these pieces, while Rame plays the role of beleaguered editor. We even get a glimpse into

Fo and Rame's personal lives when Fo describes the way Rame prepared for her most recent role. Whenever performing a piece in the genre of realism there is no room for breaking of the fourth wall. The performers in this genre must stay in character for the entirety of the piece, to uphold the contract of the fourth wall between audience and performer. If either audience or performer break the fourth wall, the illusion is broken, and the piece will likely suffer. Fo is not unique for simply breaking the fourth wall but taking it one step further. He not only acknowledges the audience but invites them into the narrative and into his personal life.

Dario Fo can break the fourth wall by turning to the audience and referencing the way his wife answers the phone at home. However, he can also break the fourth wall with his authorial voice. Dario accomplishes this in his hunger comedy, *We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay!* with the clever use of a sympathetic police officer. The play opens with two of our lead characters, Antonia and Margherita, discussing the hunger riot they just returned from. Both women smuggle food out of the grocery store under their clothes and worry that the police will be searching for them. In the following scene Antonia's husband, Giovanni, has come home and after a brief discussion with Giovanni, she leaves to speak with Margherita. Moments after Antonia leaves, Giovanni hears a knock on the door from a policeman. The Sergeant is going door to door searching for stolen groceries from the hunger riot. Giovanni shows contempt towards The Sergeant at first but slowly realizes this policeman is different. The Sergeant not only sympathizes with the starving workers but shows solidarity with Giovanni. The Sergeant claims that his salary is not enough either and he is a police officer out of necessity. Throughout the entirety of their interaction, Giovanni is skeptical and incredulous at The Sergeant's progressive ideologies. *We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay!* was written in 1974 and by that time many audiences were familiar with Fo's sociopolitical ideologies and past difficulties with law

enforcement. The Sergeant's solidarity combined with Giovanni's confusion, is a comment by Fo regarding how far-fetched it would seem for a police officer to hold such beliefs. The idea is so ridiculous as to be laughable. Giovanni asks The Sergeant twice during their conversation, "Are you really a cop?" (Fo, 22) and after The Sergeant's exit Giovanni is still not convinced.

Fo breaks the fourth wall in another way within *We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay!* and does so by casting one actor in four separate roles. Only a handful of minutes pass from the exit of the sympathetic Sergeant when there is another knock at the door from the police. Three officers enter led by The State Trooper. The State Trooper is played by the same actor portraying The Sergeant. The only discernable difference between the two characters is a mustache slapped onto The State Trooper and slight differences in their uniforms. This decision alone breaks the fourth wall, but Fo drives the point home with the following sequence upon the entrance of The State Trooper:

GIOVANNI. Well, hello...you again?

TROOPER. What do you mean, "you again?"

GIOVANNI. Sorry, I thought you were the one from before.

TROOPER. Which one from before?

GIOVANNI. The police sergeant.

TROOPER. But I'm a state trooper.

GIOVANNI. I see. And you've got a mustache too. So you must be someone else.

What can I do for you? (Fo 26)

You can almost feel Fo mischievously elbowing the audience in the ribs with this exchange. Fo's destruction of the fourth wall in this brief sequence accomplishes multiple ends that fit perfectly with Fo's artistic aims. This policemen gag allows Fo to make a sociopolitical

comment while eliciting a laugh. Fo pokes at the police while at the same time creating a physical gag with the doppelgänger actor that will become a running bit throughout the show. The actor playing both policeman shows up two more times as different characters. Each time the actor playing the policemen reenters as a different character, someone comments on it. In act two the bit resurfaces when Luigi and Giovanni are hiding from the pursuing State Trooper. Luigi and Giovanni hear noises and think The State Trooper has found them. The same actor playing The Sergeant and State Trooper now appears as The Gravedigger. Fo once again uses his characters to point out this wall break:

LUIGI. No, it's not him. It looks like him, but it's not him.

GIOVANNI. You're right. It's not him.

GRAVEDIGGER. What were you saying? Who do I look like?

GIOVANNI. Damn, he looks just like him. Ah, I'm sorry for laughing, but you are the spitting image of the sergeant without the mustache who looks like the state trooper with the mustache. I feel like I'm in a play that I saw when I was a kid...you know, one of those theatre companies where they can't afford to pay more than a few actors, so one of them has to play the parts of all the cops. (Fo 51-52)

Fo breaks the fourth wall again with the doppelgänger device but this time to wryly comment on the lack of funds for many theatre companies. Fo dealt with financial difficulties at times in his theatrical career and this comment is likely self-referential. Fo pulls this trick one last time in the final scene of the production. This time the doppelgänger actor knocks on the door and enters as an old man. The stage directions state that the actor wears “...a white wig, his face covered in a cobweb of wrinkles.” The silly costume along with this actor's fourth entrance in a different role,

results in the most overt breaking of the fourth wall. The characters comment on the situation once again:

LUIGI. Giovanni, have you noticed that your father...looks a lot like the state trooper and the police sergeant?

GIOVANNI. Don't tell him, because he's already getting a little senile... (Fo 51)

In each reoccurrence of the actor, Fo pushes the boundary of the fourth wall further and further. In the first instance, the actor returns to the stage as The State Trooper after only just leaving as The Police Sergeant. The only discernable difference between the Police Sergeant and the State Trooper is a mustache and slightly different uniform. Without the comments by Giovanni referring to their similar appearance it could be easy to miss this doppelgänger trick by Fo. In the next iteration of this bit, Fo pushes the fourth wall a bit further than his almost identical policemen. This time our doppelgänger actor appears as a Gravedigger. The characters call attention to the actor's reoccurrence once more and Fo makes a winking joke about the lack of resources to pay actors. Fo breaks the fourth wall one last time with the final appearance of the actor as the Old Man. The actor playing all these roles is required to wear at least four different costumes for this production, but the Old Man's costume is the silliest. It is assumed that the actor playing this role is well younger than one who would normally play an old man. This fact alone breaks the fourth wall once the audience notices the actor is not an older man. This is also the third repetition of this running joke and each time it occurs, it breaks the fourth wall further.

Chapter Four: The Grotesque Clown

Dario Fo used the grotesque throughout his career, to great success. One of Fo's more well-known pieces, *Mistero Buffo*, uses a plethora of grotesque humor to poke and prod the monolith of the Catholic Church. *Mistero Buffo* was a seminal work in Fo's career and laid the groundwork for more grotesque humor. "...*Mistero* means a sacred performance, and *mistero buffo* means a grotesque spectacle." (Mitchell 4). *Mistero Buffo* was especially important to Fo's career because it was during these performances in which he began his use of grammelot. Grammelot was a form of theatre originated in 1500s Europe. "It was developed as an onomatopoeic theatrical technique to put across concepts by way of sounds which were not established words in the conventional sense." (Mitchell 7). Fo revived the grammelot tradition and put his own spin on the performance style. Fo uses grammelot as a form of grotesque mimicry. He used several dialects from different regions of Italy to portray all the characters in *Mistero Buffo*. Because *Mistero Buffo* is a collection of vignettes with a variety of characters, Fo had to utilize grammelot in every scene. Fo relied heavily on grammelot in the piece, *The American Technocrat*, in which Fo satirizes aspects of American culture. "He performed this at anti-nuclear rallies, and it is a grotesque parody of an American nuclear technician in which he mimes and utters the sounds of aeroplanes and space craft, producing perhaps one recognizable English word in ten..." (Mitchell 8). Fo's grammelot is so effective that some audience members have walked out of his performances without understanding a word of what he is saying but still detecting a satirizing of their culture. Fo once told an anecdote as an aside during a televised performance of *Mistero Buffo* in which several American audience members walked out of *The American Technocrat* due to his American grammelot.

One of Fo's greatest strengths as an artist was using the grotesque to shed light on the grotesquery afflicting our world. Fo often portrayed the grotesquery of organized religion, especially Catholicism, in his theatre. There is a wonderful vignette within Fo's *Mistero Buffo* in which Fo uses a drunkard to highlight the grotesquery of the Christian church. This vignette is titled, *The Marriage at Cana*. The scene opens with an angel attempting to tell the audience of when Jesus turned water to wine. However, a Drunkard is present and wishes to tell the audience his version as well. The Angel immediately silences the Drunkard and chastises him for his drinking. The Drunkard attempts to tell his tale multiple times, but the Angel stops him at every turn. The angel eventually threatens to physically remove the drunkard when his attempts to tell the story do not cease. The Drunkard calls the Angel's bluff, and the Angel quickly flees in fear before a confrontation begins. The Drunkard tells the tale of Jesus turning water into wine and it runs contrary to the version portrayed in The Bible. The drunkard's version featured a Jesus that was in favor of enjoying alcohol, rather than the more conservative versions that organized Christianity often championed. Fo wished to champion a religious parable in which people were not ashamed for enjoying their consumption of alcohol. The Drunkard is a perfect storyteller for this parable as a champion of the grotesque. He slurs his words, loses his balance in multiple instances, and does not speak with grace. All these imperfections endear us to the Drunkard even more. The audiences are meant to admire his flaws because he is so jovial in his viewpoint on life. *The Marriage at Cana* also contains comments on class. The Drunkard is meant to represent the proletariat. The Angel is meant to represent organized religion and the bourgeois. The Angel will use grotesque and unsavory methods to present their version of religion. The Angel attempts to silence other interpretations of their religious texts through

intimidation, just as the church attempted to censor Dario when his religious plays did not align with their beliefs.

Fo often highlighted the grotesqueness of the body in his work. One of Fo's better-known pieces, *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, features the grotesque body of its lead character, The Maniac. The Maniac was originally written to be performed by Fo and represents the anarchic clown figure well. The Maniac is a clever trickster subverting the police at every turn while attempting to expose a murder conspiracy. The Maniac is a gifted impersonator and disguises himself on multiple occasions. In Act Two, The Maniac re-enters the scene in a grotesque disguise. He is described as wearing false moustache, glasses, wild wig, wooden leg, false hand, eye patch, and walks with a crutch. The Maniac uses his fragile body as a source of slapstick comedy. He offers a wooden hand during an introduction and loses a glass eye when given a congratulatory slap on the back. The Maniac takes his grotesqueness even further when he nonchalantly swallows his glass eye as if taking an Aspirin. The Maniac uses his false hand as a running bit in this scene. On two separate occasions The Maniac's false hand pops off during a handshake. After The Maniac loses his wooden hand during the second handshake he calmly rummages through his bag and attaches a different false hand to his wrist. This hand is described as "Elegant, manicured, with nails varnished." (Fo 61) The journalist in the scene describes the hand as a woman's. As the scene progresses, The Maniac slowly sheds his grotesque disguise. He removes his eyepatch and disconnects his wooden leg. Although The Maniac's disguise serves its purpose well as slapstick comedy, it also doubles as political commentary by Fo. The Maniac enters the scene in ridiculous costume. This absurd appearance represents the grotesque lie of the police's murder conspiracy. Most astute observers could deduce that the police's story was fabricated, just as audience members could obviously spot The

Maniac's silly disguise. As the scene unfurls The Maniac's disguise is slowly stripped away, just as the lies of the police are eventually revealed. Once The Maniac sheds his odd disguise, it makes the grotesque acts of the police seem even more disgusting. Fo's juxtaposition of The Maniac's ridiculous getup along with the deplorable acts of the police are perfectly exemplified in the closing moments of the piece. In the final moments, The Maniac gains the upper hand by arming a bomb and holding all in the room hostage to his whims. The Maniac handcuffs the policemen to prevent their escape, arms the bomb, and exits while leaving the lives of the policemen in the hands of the journalist. The journalist is given the choice of escaping and leaving the policemen to their deaths or rescuing the officers that murdered and framed an innocent man. The journalist rushes out and leaves the policemen to their doom. However, this is a false ending. The Maniac returns to the stage and explains that this ending would not be realistic or accepted by society. The lights go back up to the moment in which the reporter must decide what to do and this time she saves the policemen. After the policemen are free, they realize the journalist could reveal their crimes and the policemen handcuff the journalist to the window frame. The policemen exit laughing and the stage goes dark except for a lone spotlight on The Maniac, who gives one final quip to the audience before the bomb goes off, proving him correct all along. Fo uses The Maniac's grotesque body to illustrate the even more grotesque actions of the police while simultaneously weaving in slapstick comedy. This combination of physical comedy and biting sociopolitical commentary combine to create a rare form of art that Fo is notoriously known for.

Elements of the grotesque run throughout Dario Fo's mistaken identity play, *About Face*. Dario Fo's prologues are often essential for setting the tone and context of his pieces and that is no more evident than in *About Face*. The grotesque begins immediately in the opening scene of

Act One. Scene One opens in a hospital with Rosa visiting whom she believes is her husband, Antonio. Rosa is visiting who she thinks is her husband after an awful accident left him badly injured. The mangled man in the hospital is in fact the president of Fiat car company, Mr. Agnelli, and is so badly injured that he is mistaken for Rosa's husband, Antonio. However, instead of an actor playing the injured man a puppet is wheeled out with strings attached to his limbs like a marionette. This puppet represents Rosa's injured husband and is a brilliant use of the grotesque body. The puppet creates an alienation effect on the audience. Alienation is a tactic to distance the audience from the realistic elements of a play. It calls attention to the fact that the audience is watching a play and dissolves the fourth wall in a way. The use of the puppet allows Fo to elevate his slapstick comedy. After the puppet is rolled in, multiple slapstick gags ensue. These gags often including Rosa accidentally harming the puppet to hilarious results. After a monologue describing her husband, Rosa accidentally pulls a cable which sends the puppet flying into the air. Later in the scene Rosa accidentally leans against a lever which drops a lamp onto the head of the puppet. Because the puppet is the one being harmed, instead of a live actor, the audience is given additional license to laugh at the puppet's misfortune. A live actor covered in bandages might elicit sympathy from the audience if a lamp fell on their head or they were thrown violently from their bed. Instead, the audience can laugh without remorse while an inanimate puppet suffers all forms of slapstick comedy. The puppet is only utilized in the first scene of Act One, but the grotesque body remains throughout the piece. In the second scene of Act One, the puppet is replaced by a live actor. The stage directions describe our mangled character: "*The Double is rolled into the room in a wheelchair. His face is bandaged with a web of elastic bands, which are connected to rings on his chin, nose, cheeks, and forehead. The nurses hold strings connected to these rings.*" (Fo 16). Although a live actor

now plays this character, his head is still manipulated with strings by the nurses like the puppet in the previous scene. Fo removed the grotesque element of the wooden puppet body but the effect of a puppet being manipulated for slapstick comedy remained. The scene unfolds as a humorous monkey see, monkey do, as The Doctor attempts to teach The Double to speak after his injury. Whenever The Double needs to speak his mouth is manipulated by the nurses. The Double's face is not the only grotesque element to the character. This scene introduces grotesque language in combination with the puppet-style movement of his head. The Double never correctly mimics The Doctor and is constantly confused by Rosa's interjections. The Double mimics the same line repeatedly until his words turn completely to jazz scatting. The comedy in this scene stems from The Double's inability to pronounce his words correctly, his silly gibberish, and The Double's puppet-like head movements. All these aspects represent the grotesque and are vital to the scene. The most grotesque and iconic scene in the play takes place in the first scene of Act Two. This scene unfolds in classic mistaken identity fashion. The Double enters first and in keeping with the grotesque theme, inserts a funnel into the side of his neck to drink water. After this drinking display, The Double pleads to Rosa that he is hungry. However, he cannot eat normally due to his injury. His food must be ground up to a paste so it can be inserted through his nose, and he must be restrained to complete the uncomfortable process. Before the feeding can commence the police startle the two and Rosa sends The Double upstairs to wait while she prepares dinner. As soon as The Double leaves, the real Antonio enters the scene. Rosa cannot tell the difference between the two and prepares to feed her husband by strapping him to the chair. Rosa begins by jamming a tube into Antonio's neck, just as The Double did earlier in this scene. She completes the setup by strapping his head to the back of the chair and placing a mask on his head with feeding tubes jammed in his nose.

Antonio even comments on his grotesque appearance when he says, "...Rosa, I feel like an elephant...why do you go see those kinds of films?" Fo compares Antonio in that moment to an iconic grotesque figure in storytelling, The Elephant Man. Fo takes it one step further when he combines grotesque language with appearance. Antonio will not stop protesting to Rosa's extreme feeding methods so Rosa stuffs a napkin in his mouth to keep him quiet. When Antonio tries to protest again, his shouts are transformed into the sound of a foghorn by the tubes. Rosa realizes that Antonio cannot breathe with the tubes in his nose and the napkin in his mouth, so she stuffs Antonio's clarinet into his mouth. This time, "*Antonio's shouts come out as clarinet blues, commenting grotesquely on the situation*" (Fo 43). The feeding machine is a meat grinder attached to the tubes in Antonio's nose. As Rose begins feeding Antonio the lament of his clarinet turns to desperate rock music and before this comedy horror show can go on too long there is a knock on the door from the police. The policemen break down the door and witness the twisted scene taking place. The police release Antonio and he gladly leaves with them to avoid more food torture from Rosa. This scene is the culmination of the grotesque elements of this play. Fo gives the audience the grotesque body, grotesque language, and grotesque mistaken identity all in one scene. Fo's combination of humor and grotesquery create a unique piece of art that invites laughter, and political commentary. No Dario Fo piece would be complete without some form of sociopolitical commentary. The inspiration of this piece stems from the kidnapping of former Italian Prime Minister, Aldo Moro. Moro was a progressive politician who was kidnapped and eventually killed when the Italian government refused to negotiate with the kidnappers. Fo felt the government abandoned Moro and he rights this wrong in *About Face*. In the final scene The Double reveals that he sent an anonymous letter to the press demanding the release of thirty-two political prisoners, the same demand Moro's kidnappers made. The Italian

government caves to the pressure and the political prisoners are released. *About Face* could best be described as another of Fo's grotesque political fairy tales, with the emphasis on grotesque.

Chapter Five: Franca & Feminism

Dario Fo is a Nobel prize winning artist whose work has been performed across the globe. Fo has been a champion of the downtrodden, the financially exploited, the voiceless, the workers. All that said, his theatrical career would not have flourished as it did without his theatrical and life partner, Franca Rame. Franca Rame was a talented and influential artist in her own right but has not received the same notoriety as Fo. Although Rame was a theatrical collaborator of Fo's since the beginning of his career in the 1950s, she did not begin to receive official credit until nearly twenty years later. Rame was primarily an actress in the early parts of her career and during the 1950s and 1960s she was given little opportunity to play characters of substance. "These parts were, as she readily admitted, essentially decorative. In the 1950s, the empty head under a blonde hairpiece, atop characterless eyes and an inviting smile, the whole perched above a generous bosom, were the indispensable characteristics for the rising female star." (Farrell 232). Rame was forced to play the only roles offered to her at the time. She was forced to lean into the stereotypes. However, this did not take away from the brilliant artistic mind that Franca always possessed, it simply took more time and progress for the rest of the world to see it. Someone who surely noticed Franca's talent was her partner, Dario Fo. However, Dario was not above using Franca as a sex symbol in his works either. In an interview for a women's magazine, *Noi Donne*, Rame said: "I carried this kind of sexist burden for many years. Even in Dario's plays, I was never, ever asked to display any kind of skill, craft, stage sense...Obviously he could hardly make me hunchbacked, but he gave me at least a minimum of brain." (Farrell 233). Even someone as progressive as Dario Fo was not immune to using some forms of gender stereotype. He gave Franca's characters more brain and autonomy than many at the time, but much progress remained to be made. It was in the 1970s in which the feminism

movement became more prominent, and this was also the time in which Dario and Franca started to incorporate more intentional feminist ideas into their work. The 1970s is also the decade in which Franca finally began to receive official credit for artistic pieces that Rame and Fo created together. Fo and Rame had been collaborating in the theatre for decades prior, but it was only in the late seventies when Rame began receiving official credit. She received no credit for her contribution to the reworking of the script in rehearsal or the rewriting and editing after rehearsals. Fo is a prolific writer and creator, but not the most adept editor. "...the tedium, the routine, the concentration on unrewarding detail challenged his attention span." (Farrell 236). Fo is notorious for disliking stage directions. In the early published versions of his plays all stage directions are utterly lacking. It was not until Franca decided that they were indispensable did they begin to appear. Dario does not need stage directions because he would gladly burst into an improvised monologue when the time was right or begin muttering in a fabricated language while dancing wildly. However, not all artists possess Dario's manic creative energy. Without Franca's stage directions how would his plays be replicated with any sense of fidelity? It was Rame's job as editor to pare down Fo's zany ideas to the ones that worked best.

We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay! premiered in 1974. Although Dario and Franca had not quite reached the height of their feminist works, this was a clear start. *We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay!* is not exactly a feminist manifesto but it does feature a leading female character who drives the action of the play. This action-oriented character is Antonia, and she was often played by Rame during the play's initial run. The play opens with Antonia regaling her friend, Margherita, with the story of a riot at the supermarket. When Antonia arrives at the supermarket tensions are already high due to extreme price inflation at the store and salary decreases among the shoppers. A group of women are already arguing with the manager of the supermarket when Antonia

overhears it. Antonia becomes angered by the supermarket manager and yells over that he is a thief. This comment by Antonia sparks the women to begin a protest when the manager refuses to give in. The women all begin taking groceries for free in response to the ridiculously high prices and in some way this action was instigated by Antonia. It is also notable that a group of women are the catalysts for this hunger riot and no men are present except for the supermarket manager. The supermarket manager, a man, is the antagonist in the scene while the women subvert his unfair system. It is the women who take matters into their own hands when they are being unfairly treated by the supermarket manager and their action is sparked by Antonia. Antonia is not only the driver of the action but the comedy as well. After Antonia has told her thrilling story, she realizes her husband would never approve of her actions at the supermarket. Therefore, she resolves to hide the supermarket incident from her husband, Giovanni, by claiming her friend is pregnant. Her friend Margherita is not pregnant and was hiding the stolen groceries from Giovanni and her own husband, at the behest of Antonia. Antonia must then bend over backwards to explain how her friend has suddenly become visibly pregnant in only a week's time since Giovanni has seen her. It is comedy gold to watch Antonia continuously back herself into a corner trying to explain the ridiculous circumstances for her friend's pregnancy while Giovanni desperately tries to keep up. In this instance the gender roles are reversed from what was commonly seen at the time. It was much more common to see a man on stage as driver of the action while the actress in the same scene was simply tasked with reacting or playing the straight role. It was normally Fo playing these driver roles while Rame was often tasked with playing accessory roles. In this piece it was Rame playing the driver, in Antonia, and Fo playing the reactionary, in Giovanni. This theme continues for the entirety of the play as Fo wanders through scenes as the hapless Giovanni while Rame gets herself into one zany situation after

another. Perhaps the most iconic and hilarious scene in the play involves Antonia and Margherita outwitting a police officer. The Trooper has come to find any stolen groceries and both women have the stolen goods stuffed under their shirts. Both women are pretending to be pregnant and even though Antonia comes close to being caught many times, she always outsmarts the Trooper. The gullible Trooper is easily fooled by Antonia's ruse that he is cursed by Saint Eulalia, a fertility god. Antonia dupes the officer into believing he has gone blind when the lights in their apartment are shut off due to lack of payment. The Trooper panics at his loss of sight and accidentally knocks himself out by running headfirst into a wardrobe. As if Antonia had not already done enough, she then tries to revive the Trooper with Giovanni's oxygen tank. However, Antonia accidentally sets the valve to hydrogen and the Trooper begins to blow up like a balloon. Just before the scene ends and curtain falls Antonia says, "...Oh God, what a belly...what a belly! I made a policeman pregnant!" (Fo 24). Fo subverts several gender norms in this play. Antonia drives the plot by involving herself in the hunger riot, hatching the plan of pretending to be pregnant, and tricking the Trooper by convincing him he has fallen under a curse by the saint of fertility. In many previous iterations of these screwball comedies, it was the man that got himself into trouble and had to wriggle out by the end. Fo subverts male gender norms in this piece as well with his depiction of the gullible but good-natured husbands, Giovanni and Luigi. Giovanni and Luigi are not aware of their wives' exploits until the final moments in the play. They are the ones reacting to situations created by their wives. This sense of authority for a female character was not commonplace in theatre at the time. This is not to say that Fo created a feminist masterpiece with *We Won't Pay! We Won't Pay!* There are still patriarchal elements such as the women being charged with cooking and keeping up the home

while the men work for a salary. However, these sparks of feminism would increase in Fo's work.

These sparks turned to flames when Fo and Rame made their return to Italian television for a collaboration on a series titled, *Let's Talk About Women*. *Let's Talk About Women* was a collection of sketches and songs dealing with situations such as abortion, the absence of actresses in the Elizabethan theatre, the holy family and more. After so many years in Fo's shadow, this was an opportunity for Rame to take the spotlight. "This was an attempt to give Franca Rame a series of roles which were not the usual 'support' roles which she had played in most of Fo's work prior to the 1970s, as well as deal with the condition of women." (Mitchell 147). In a sketch titled *The Pregnant Man*, a wealthy man who is president of the anti-abortion league becomes pregnant through a process called parthenogenesis. As soon as he becomes pregnant the man decides to have an abortion, while both his wife and daughter are pregnant. This piece illustrates the obvious irony and hypocrisy of men's authority over women's reproductive decisions. One of the more noteworthy sketches of *Let's Talk About Women* was titled, *Waking Up*. *Waking up* is a monologue highlighting the difficulties of a working-class mother going through her normal routine. It portrays the mother as overworked and underappreciated by her husband and society. She must complete all the household chores, care for the children, all while working a full-time job. The Mother sums up her difficult existence during a fight with her husband:

We slave away like pack-horses and never even get a moment to ourselves. Is this what marriage is all about? Has it ever entered your head that I might have problems too? Do you ever ask me if I'm tired, or if I'd like a hand? Who cooks your dinner? I do. Who does the dishes afterwards? I do. Who does the shopping? I do. Who does all the financial

somersaults to survive until the end of the month? And then I have to hold down a job on top of all that! (Mitchell 147-148)

This sketch depicted the real-life issues working class mothers in Italy were facing. It is also notable that this argument is at least partially resolved by the end of the piece, making it feel more realistic to the audience, rather than a rhetorical statement delivered straight to the audience. This period clearly affected Franca because she went on a personal strike. This infamous strike has several stories attached to it. One account stated:

In some, she put a notice up in her home alerting her husband and her son that if, from that point on, they wanted clothes washed or ironed, meals prepared, rooms tidied, phone calls recorded, they would have to do it themselves. In another, she informed the company and the groups who used the Palazzina that she would no longer be available for the various services and tasks she had previously performed. In further versions, she announced that she was retiring from the stage. (Farrell 241)

A few years after the success of *Let's Talk About Women*, Fo and Rame collaborated again on a feminist piece titled, *All House, Bed and Church*. This piece consisted of five monologues which Rame performed solo. "They provided a one-woman show which Franca Rame toured all over Italy and Europe, achieving an acclaim which almost paralleled that of Fo's *Mistero Buffo*." (Mitchell 148). Rame's role as a writer increased during this time as well and she took a more hands on approach. In some ways Rame and Fo's roles were switched, in that Rame sketched out situations for Fo to dramatize into written form. The success of *All House, Bed and Church* also provided an independence for Rame that she had not previously experienced. In the past, Rame and Fo would often tour and perform together. The immense popularity of *All*

House, Bed and Church allowed Rame to tour alone on some occasions. On the occasions they toured separately, it was often Rame performing *All House, Bed and Church* while Fo performed *Mistero Buffo*. On those separate performance occasions both artists were performing their own one-person shows for highly acclaimed work. Rame finally appeared to be standing on more equal footing with Fo, after so long in his shadow. During the touring of this production Rame expressed her inequality in the past with Fo:

I've understood completely what the condition of women and wives involves, especially that of the wife of a famous actor like Fo. It means always being put in second place in relation to a man, and being judged as incapable of any autonomous choice (Mitchell 148).

Although Rame was discounted in the past, she was finally being allowed more space. Rame was the first of the two artists to perform in London at the Riverside Studios in 1982. Rame continued to perform this piece over the years and by 1990 it had been performed in thirty-five countries. By that time, it had become Fo and Rame's second most performed play.

Although Franca's feminist contributions were noteworthy and important, she never seemed to fully embrace the feminist movement of the time.

If women's liberation was an aim Franca accepted, release from convention presented a difficulty for her. She always adhered to standards of propriety and decorum...she always responded with a shudder to words which could be regarded as vulgar...She was more at ease in dresses than in blue jeans and blouses. (Farrell 243)

Rame showed more interest in class and the political. United States feminist critic, Sue-Ellen Case, included a section on Rame in her book, *Feminism and Theatre*. She chose two monologues from Rame's, *All House, Bed and Church*, to analyze and argued that:

There is no notion of patriarchy as such in Rame's Marxist-feminist texts: instead, the privileges accorded to the male gender are seen as an extension of capitalist production modes and class privilege into the personal, domestic sphere. Women appear as an exploited class within an exploited class. The vocabulary of Marxist thought is used to describe their condition and hurled as insults at the leftist men. Though the plays dramatise a lack of understanding on the part of male Marxists, they are not intended as final critiques. Rather, they are located in the tradition of socialist realism, aimed at educating the men and women in the audience. (Mitchell 153)

Case clearly notes Rame's feminist ideas in these texts, but they are not her chief interest.

Rame's heart has always lied with the workers and their struggle. This period was crucial for Rame in that she began to receive credit that was long overdue for her years of contributions to Fo's theatre. Rame edited and helped conceive many pieces for Fo over the years of their theatrical partnership but now her name was finally appearing on the front page. She also began touring by herself in this period and no longer needed Dario's presence to sell out huge venues. This period clearly affected Rame and Fo in several ways. It likely affected their personal relationship on multiple levels. If the anecdotes are to be believed, Rame and Fo changed the responsibilities assigned to the domestic chores. Rame did the majority of the housework before this period, and she supposedly went on strike from her domestic chores until a compromise was reached with Fo and her son. This domestic protest fits perfectly with Fo and Rame's consistent support of proletariat. Rame represents the proletariat in this scenario, and it would have gone against everything Fo represented to keep this patriarchal dynamic in place. This rings true based on some of the monologues written by Rame in which she pushes back against the traditional patriarchal expectations of women. In *Waking Up*, the housewife character vents her

frustrations at the uneven domestic workload. Rame undoubtedly saw at least some of herself in the housewife character, but the housewife never rectifies her situation. The monologue ends with the expectation that the status quo will continue, and she will resume doing all the chores. Rame refuses to accept this fate and confronts her family. Rame succeeds while the housewife character is unable to change her domestic circumstances. This feminist period influenced Fo as well. This was one of the first occasions in which he wrote pieces specifically about feminist topics. It is also no coincidence that Rame began receiving credit for her theatrical contributions during this period. Fo began writing more complex and interesting roles for Rame to perform. This was a detour from many of the previous types of roles Fo assigned to Rame. Fo was not above casting Rame as a beautiful sex symbol, complete with blonde wig and low-cut blouse, in his earlier works. However, once Rame and Fo reached this feminist period of their careers, Rame rarely went back to playing the sex symbol role she had been given in the past. Instead, it was Rame touring solo for her one-woman shows educating the masses on the inequalities women face every day. At their cores Rame and Fo are educators attempting to provide lessons on how the audience can better themselves and society. Although class and politics were always a chief concern for the Fo duo, this period opened the floodgates of feminism. There would be no looking back for Fo and certainly not for Rame.

Chapter Six: Adaptation

The anarchic clown is a malleable theatrical figure. It can be shifted, twisted, and molded to suit the needs of the moment. This malleability creates a fantastic opportunity for adaptation. Adaptation is a vital tool in the theatre to mold a story, so it better fits an era, audience, or moment. Pushing theatrical convention is one of the anarchic clown's top priorities. Director, William Kentridge, does a masterful job of breaking theatrical convention with the variety of visual storytelling mediums he uses. One of the signature features of Kentridge's *Ubu and the Truth Commission* is the accompanying animations. Kentridge employs a running animation on the back wall of the stage throughout the show. It adds several useful elements to the production. One major contribution of the animations is the added style and tone to accentuate the piece. The inclusion of Pa and Ma Ubu as characters carries a certain expectation. Both characters represent chaos, anarchy, and an overall outsider tone. The animation invokes a grotesque and offbeat tone. The colors of the animations are all blacks and whites and many of the drawings are relatively simple. Many of the humans portrayed in the animations are stick figures or depictions of Alfred Jarry's Ubu. Those in the audience not familiar with Alfred Jarry's original drawings of Pa Ubu might not recognize him. However, Kentridge includes the animated version of Ubu in almost every animated sequence. The beauty of animation is that it can portray so much that normal reality cannot. The animations do a splendid job of showing that Ubu takes more forms than just the military captain portrayed by the real-life actor. The animations show Ubu as not only cruel military captain, but the overall avatar of Apartheid South Africa. In one animated sequence, Ubu enters the scene but quickly undresses and reshapes itself into the form of a helicopter. The helicopter flies away, and intimates that Ubu represents surveillance from the colonizing regime. In another scene our real life Ubu character

is showering after a night of terrorizing South African citizens. As he begins to shower, an animated sequence of a shower begins to run on the back wall. We see the animated shower washing debris and body parts off Ubu as they pile up in the drain. Severed body parts, dynamite, and various grotesque items pile up so heavily in the drain that the animated shower is almost filled to the brim. Without the addition of the animated sequence, the audience would simply see Ubu taking a shower after a long night of work. The animated sequence accentuates the tone by hammering home the atrocities Ubu committed. The animated sequence also further highlights Ubu's callousness as he figuratively and literally washes off his atrocious deeds for the evening. Perhaps the most effective animated sequences depict Ubu and Brutus perpetrating a variety of violent acts. They ship bombs hidden in packages to various unsuspecting citizens. They are shown water torturing prisoners and beating them with clubs. These awful acts are slightly softened by the animated medium. Seeing documentary footage of this violence could have been triggering and likely too violent for the audience to receive. The animation is a way to depict these awful acts without the visceral images of real people being harmed. The animations are haunting, but they allow for enough palatability to be absorbed by an audience. The animated sequences also add a vital offbeat tone to the piece. Ubu has long been considered a cartoonish figure and the addition of the animations adds to the already weird tone of the play.

Kentridge employs the image of Ubu in a myriad of ways and it causes the piece to stand out even more in its visual imagery. Not only does Jarry's original Ubu figure appear in the animations, but in various other forms throughout the piece. There is a short sequence in the middle of the piece in which the real life Ubu character enters the scene through a trapdoor in the floor. As he pokes his head through the trapdoor, the audience sees Ubu's shadow projected behind him on the back wall. Although the shadow is not a match to the actor playing Ubu on

stage. The silhouette is a shadow of Alfred Jarry's Ubu with his pointed head, protruding belly, and oversized hands. The silhouette mimics the real life Ubu at first but soon becomes a living shadow and takes on a life of its own. The shadow whips the real life Ubu several times and cackles afterward. However, the Shadow Ubu does not stay long and leaves the scene after he has whipped real life Ubu. Shadow Ubu reappears a few scenes later in three-dimensional form. This time Shadow Ubu enters exactly as Alfred Jarry drew him in the late nineteenth century. He sports his trademarked potbelly with a bullseye on the center, pointed head, and even carries a toilet wand as a scepter. The toilet wand was a particularly nice touch from Kentridge. Shadow Ubu prances in while real life Ubu laments his arrival. Shadow Ubu first subjugates real life Ubu by telling him how to respond during his hearing at the truth commission. Once Shadow Ubu has made his point, he grabs real life Ubu, and they begin a strange dance number. A tropic tune warbles in the background as both Ubus sway slowly together around the stage. This sequence is a brilliant use of imagery by Kentridge and provides another example in which he pushes the limits of conventional visual imagery.

The use of puppetry is one of the more noteworthy aspects of visual imagery within *Ubu and the Truth Commission*. It is not often you see the number of puppet characters outnumber the flesh and blood characters in a piece. This is certainly the case within *Ubu and the Truth Commission*. Pa and Ma Ubu are the only real-life characters in the piece. The remaining puppet characters include Brutus, Pa Ubu's three headed attack dog, Niles, a crocodile that devours incriminating evidence for Pa Ubu, and a collection of South African citizens testifying at the truth commission. Brutus and Niles are key characters that aid Pa Ubu in his debauchery, but the South African citizen puppets bring a necessary grounding of the material. These citizens each take turns throughout the piece giving their testimonials to the commission. The dialogue

for these puppet citizens is taken verbatim from the testimonials of real South African citizens brutalized during Apartheid. Their stories are horrifyingly violent and brutal. The puppets all appear worn and tired. They have lines on their faces indicating their difficult existences. Many of the citizens look tired and sickly. The combination of puppetry with real accounts of savagery during Apartheid creates a wonderful Brechtian alienation. Bertolt Brecht believed it necessary to alienate the audience at times to assure that they did not become too emotionally invested into a piece and were still engaging it intellectually. Alienation is designed to remind the audience that they are watching a performance, and this keeps the mind engaged for the intellectual messages from the play. Kentrige has his cake and eats it too with his use of puppetry. The audience can be affected intellectually and emotionally in these moments of confession from the puppet citizens. The fact that these stories come from puppets and not flesh and blood actors, lowers the stakes of their suffering a bit. The audience does not feel as much empathy and pain for these puppets as they would a real-life actor, which allows the audience to stay more engaged intellectually. However, the authentic stories of tragedy and beleaguered appearance of the puppets adds necessary emotional weight. The combination of emotional weight from real stories and the alienation of puppetry should create the greatest possible impact for the audience. Testifying citizens are not the only puppets in this play. Pa Ubu's three headed dog Brutus serves as a vital metaphor within the piece. This puppet serves as Ubu's attack dog and represents the three heads of power in Apartheid South Africa. The three heads represent the front facing political regime, the secret police that operate behind the scenes to subjugate South African citizens, and the military machine. By making Brutus a puppet, Kentrige alienates the audience once again. Ubu and Brutus are depicted committing heinous crimes at various points of the show. However, they are often portrayed through brief animated sequences. The audience

understands that Ubu and Brutus are intimidating citizens in awful ways without being required to watch real humans being brutalized. The Brutus puppet also adds some necessary levity to the piece. This piece is often dark in tone and Brutus brings vital physical comedy. The separate heads often bicker and get themselves tangled up. They also seem gullible and oafish at times. They are frequently manipulated by Ubu to comic effect. There is even a moment in which Ubu and Brutus break into song. The singing elicits a laugh from the audience and softens Brutus even more. The puppets not only add levity but contribute to tone. There is a puppet vulture that serves as Pa and Ma Ubu's pet. The vulture has no lines and simply screeches at the beginning of scenes inside the Ubu home. The puppet has bright red eyes and spins around fervently on its perch. It serves no purpose to the plot and does not have any lines, but its constant presence adds to the grotesque tone of the play.

Handspring Puppet Company adapted Ubu to fit a moment in Post-Apartheid Africa. Director, William Kentridge, and Handspring Puppet Company transport Pa and Ma Ubu from the purgatory of Poland to South Africa. *Ubu and the Truth Commission* is an excellent example of adapting the anarchic clown. Kentridge took Alfred Jarry's prototype version of the anarchic clown and inserted them into a historical moment in Africa. The first example of adaptation within *Ubu and the Truth Commission* is the specificity of time and place. Alfred Jarry's stage directions describe the setting of *Ubu Roi* as: "The scene...is set in Poland, which is to say, nowhere." Jarry meant for *Ubu Roi*'s setting to be universal. He wanted to elicit the feeling that these events could occur anywhere. While some original aspects remained, *Ubu and the Truth Commission* portrays an evolution of the prototype clown from broad caricature of humanity's flaws to a specific example of cruelty in the form of colonization. The piece depicts the circumstances surrounding the truth and reconciliation commission. This commission was

designed to reveal all the truths that were hidden during the colonization of South Africa. Within the play, Pa Ubu takes the form of military general for the colonizing regime. Pa Ubu has a pet in the form of a three headed dog with the body of a suitcase named Brutus. Brutus represents the three arms of power in colonized South Africa. The political state, the secret police, and the military represent Brutus's three heads. Ubu went on numerous nightly strolls with Brutus terrorizing the citizens of South Africa. The brutalities are depicted by the animations displayed on the back wall of the show. These animations are used frequently to help depict the zany and surreal aspects of the piece. While Ubu is walking Brutus, the animation behind him shows the sidewalk moving. The actor walks in place while the scenery moves behind him. The audience sees Ubu and Brutus attack the citizens in a handful of haunting animated sequences. Citizens are beaten during questionings, unsuspecting civilians are bombed by Brutus, and others are brutalized with cruel tactics like water torture. Once Ubu returns from his night of terrorizing citizens we see him taking a shower while an animation of the shower plays on the back wall. The animation depicts Ubu washing off all the atrocities he has committed by showing bones, skulls, and remains washing down the drain. Ubu washes off so much violence that the drain clogs with severed body parts and debris. The variety of visual mediums used in this piece add to its specificity and relevance. Throughout the piece, documentary footage of Apartheid South Africa is shown. The piece also uses verbatim testimonies from citizens that participated in the truth commission. This specificity of time place is a clear step forward from the prototype anarchic clown of Alfred Jarry's. Jarry's Ubu was meant to encapsulate the universal grotesqueries of humanity. His vision was not nearly as specific as Kentridge's portrayal of Apartheid South Africa. This leap from the general to the specific, is exactly the kind of evolution the anarchic clown needs. Dario Fo brings much of this specificity in his version of

the anarchic clown. Kentridge takes the best of Dario's specificity and Jarry's
unconventionality. This combination results in a piece that moves the anarchic clown forward.

Chapter Seven: The Clown in the Classroom

The stage is not the only place in which the anarchic clown is useful. The anarchic clown can also be used effectively in the classroom. The anarchic clown can help promote diversity and inclusion. The anarchic clown is inherently a champion for the downtrodden and minority. The anarchic clown can often be inserted into classical works to infuse a level of inclusion and diversity into a piece that is sometimes lacking.

Shakespeare's heightened language often presents a barrier for many students. Some students are unable to effectively interpret Shakespeare's writing, and this can drastically reduce their understanding of its meaning. Even with skilled theatre teachers explaining Shakespeare's plotting and language, students that struggle with the language will likely glean less from a lesson than a student who is better with the heightened language. There are a number of ways the anarchic clown can bridge the gap for students struggling with its language. The first step often involves choosing the correct clown for the job. We know the anarchic clown is malleable so it can take a plethora of different forms. The anarchic clown in the classroom is its most evolved form yet, therefore it is not limited to only Ubu or Dario Fo. The anarchic clown is not a lone figure, it is whoever best fits the mold at that moment while carrying on the spirit of Ubu and Fo. *Othello* is a piece familiar to many theatre classrooms across the world and its evergreen story is still relevant today. It is a complex play and certainly gives no reprieve to students with issues understanding heightened language. Perhaps Pa Ubu could be of assistance in aiding these students. Pa Ubu may be a greedy, selfish, and deplorable figure but he is also straightforward and simple. When presented with an issue Pa Ubu looks for the simplest, plainest, easiest avenue to accomplish it. Ubu contains a matter-of-factness to him that seems to render the complex simple. "Pa Ubu incarnates quite spectacularly the Pleasure Principle gone

rampant, ‘ripping people up because he enjoys the idea,’ as Jarry says, ‘and imploring the Russian soldiers not to shoot in his direction because he does not enjoy the idea.’” (Remshardt 180) Ubu’s simplicity and straightforwardness are ideal qualities needed to simplify the complex language of *Othello*. Ubu could be used as a form of translator from scene to scene. He could break down the complex ideas in each scene or conversation in ways that students can understand. Ubu could serve as the anarchic clown on the fringes of the scene commenting on the action. Ubu could be hiding somewhere within a scene of *Othello*, commenting on the action as the scene proceeds as normal. We know from previously in this paper that the anarchic clown loves to break the fourth wall. As all powerful and omniscient observer, Ubu can pause a scene, explain it to the audience, and return to the action. It would be as if Ubu pressed pause on the play to assure the audience was up to speed, and then pressed play when everyone was ready. Ubu is an excellent tool to teach Shakespeare because there are several Shakespeare parodies within *Ubu Roi*. Why not use him to break down some of the more complex characters and themes in theatre? This Ubu translation will have to be prepared by the teacher. This may require some creativity or additional work on the part of the instructor to break down the complex language of Shakespeare into the simple language of Ubu. However, the reward of a more engaged class with greater understanding of vital material is worth the effort. Ubu is not the only figure that can be useful in bridging the gap of Shakespeare’s language. The figure can take many forms, provided it complies with the ethos of the anarchic clown. This flexibility will allow teachers to individualize these lessons to shape their teaching style and the dynamic of their classroom. The vile and crude Ubu might not be appropriate for a class of sixth grade theatre students. This teacher could employ more of a Dario Fo type figure. Dario is a gentler, more age-appropriate version for this class. There are numerous other figures that could fit

under the anarchic clown category and each instructor must find the right one for each lesson.

Many theatre students will study Shakespeare in some way and this method can remove a major barrier to understanding.

The anarchic clown can be a valuable tool to promote inclusion and diversity. The Italian theatre troupe, Teatro delle Albe, channeled the anarchic clown in their works with various Chicago schools. The Italian troupe worked with various age groups from Chicago Public Schools to Northwestern University. They even offered public lectures in Chicago to discuss fighting stereotypes of newcomers to Italy. The culmination of the Italian troupe's time in Chicago was a two-night performance at the Museum of Contemporary Art. The piece performed was titled, *I Polacchi*, which is an adaption of Alfred Jarry's infamous, *Ubu Roi*. Once again, the prototype clown is conjured to assist the theatre. The director and founder of the troupe, Marco Martinelli, cast his Ubu adaptation from a diverse pool of students at Senn High School, in Chicago. The majority of Martinelli's cast was African American. The troupe and its backers wished to showcase that some themes are universal. This universality allows for people from different cultures and backgrounds to come together and create art that resonates with a larger and more diverse audience. One way to achieve this universality is to emphasize gesture and de-emphasize language in performance. Alfred Jarry believed there were certain universal gestures that humans from different cultures, backgrounds, and social statuses could understand. This idea is still true today and the diverse production of *I Polacchi* heavily emphasized gesture.

Teatro delle Albe originally performed *I Polacchi* in 1998 Northern Italy. Leading up to the performance, the troupe released a short video which encapsulated the essence of the show. It was akin to a film trailer but contained the skeleton of the entire piece in just over five minutes of runtime. In these five minutes, the spirit of the anarchic clown practically bursts through the

screen. The trailer opens with the Ubu character sitting motionless in the background on a marble horse while the remainder of the cast walk back and forth in the foreground. The characters travelling in and out of frame perform many seemingly random acts. Every character seems to be performing a different act as they cross the screen, and this creates a chaotic montage of action and gesture. The trailer utilizes gesture much more than language. The actors are almost always in motion, and this creates a propulsive energy throughout the trailer. The language that does exist in the trailer is often unconventional. Much of the dialogue comes from indistinct shouting or a narrative voiceover from an unseen orator. When the characters do speak coherently it is often directly to the camera. The only spoken dialogue in the trailer is in Italian but one does need to be fluent in the language to understand. The tone of the piece is clearly communicated with the frenetic pace and constant action. Focus on gesture can assist in bridging the gap for any of those with language barriers. This focus on gesture can involve younger students more than language. Language can sometimes cause younger artists to stagnate while gesture creates movement and energy. Many students from Senn High School enjoyed their frenzied Ubu performance. An article from The Chicago Tribune previewing the show quoted some of the student reactions to their experiences: “We can let our imagination run—as long as you stay in character. It’s cool.” Another student said: “I’m a soldier—and I sometimes dance. It’s great.” So many classical works like Shakespeare or the Greek plays are language oriented. By using Ubu and the anarchic clown, students can utilize gesture and movement in more engaging ways. Teatro delle Albe are a troupe that are constantly pushing the bounds of theatre and have embraced the ideals of the anarchic clown in many ways. Their commitment to diversity and outreach should be emulated throughout the theatre world.

The establishment of Ubu as the prototype provides an excellent entry point into the anarchic clown. Ubu is not the ideal anarchic clown but is perhaps its purest form. Therefore, it is an excellent place to start for those wishing to utilize the anarchic clown for their own purposes. For the educators, theatre makers, and storytellers that have difficulty accessing or understanding the anarchic clown, Ubu is an excellent introduction. No matter how Ubu is used, he will bring the ethos of the anarchic clown with him to every situation. Those teaching theatre history classes may use Ubu as an introduction to the genre of absurdism, which many scholars agree began with Jarry. Those running professional theatre companies may adapt Ubu, just as William Kentridge and Handspring Puppet Company did.

Breaking the fourth wall is a primary tool in the anarchic clown's arsenal. The anarchic clown wishes to simultaneously subvert theatrical convention and establish a relationship with its audience. Breaking the fourth wall inherently establishes a relationship with the audience because a character is speaking directly to them. This relationship should generate more investment from the audience. The greater the audience investment, the stronger its impact will be during and after the performance. If we factor in the emancipated spectator, the anarchic clown cannot predict how the audience will react. The specific reaction does not matter to the anarchic clown as much as starting the conversation. The anarchic clown trusts its audience to form its own ideas and is disinterested in placing constraints upon them. The anarchic clown trusts the audience to take its work and create new ideas, actions, and art. Once the anarchic clown passes the baton from performer to audience, they will run with it in unknowable and dynamic ways.

The anarchic clown can be used as a tool to promote feminism in the theatre. Inserting female or feminine presenting characters that fit the anarchic clown mold is an avenue to

increase representation. Dario Fo and Franca Rame contributed to increase feminine representation, though it was not enough. It is up to current and future theatre creators to continue this representation. Using the anarchic clown in the theatre, especially a feminine presenting one, will naturally create representation.

Adaptation is the best tool to utilize the anarchic clown going forward. Adaptation creates endless possibilities for using the anarchic clown. Adaptation allows older stories to be updated using the anarchic clown. The Handspring Puppet Company beautifully adapted Ubu to suit their needs. Classical works are perfect for adaptation and using the anarchic clown is a way to update them. Adaptation allows for the anarchic clown to become more malleable. This malleability means the anarchic clown can be used more often and push the boundaries of theatre even more.

The anarchic clown fits well into a classroom environment. The anarchic clown is a natural skeptic and questioning current knowledge creates new information. The anarchic clown's physical and action-oriented nature will speak to younger students as well. Young theatre makers need to be engaged to learn in the theatre and active learning increases engagement. Establishing a passion for theatre early in life can create lifelong artists. Younger theatre makers are impressionable and if they learn to push the boundaries of theatre at an earlier age, they will be more likely to create dynamic art. Younger theatre makers respond to passion and the anarchic clown's passion to push the theatre forward has only begun.

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