molteplice da sfuggire essa stessa da ogni assoluta ed unica catalogazione. Il neo-barocco in questo senso è come una scala. Saliti sopra bisogna passare oltre.

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Antonio Scuderi. *Dario Fo and Popular Performance*. Ottawa: Legas, 1998. Pp. 119.

Currently, theatre research encourages performance rather than dramatic analysis. Responding to this call, Antonio Scuderi analyzes the work of Dario Fo in *Dario Fo and Popular Performance*. Fo himself intersects the divide between literature and performance by working as both a playwright and actor, a joint commitment for which he has been awarded a Nobel Prize for Literature (1987). The main project of *Dario Fo and Popular Performance* is to situate Dario Fo in the popular performance tradition and to offer a performance analysis of his work. As such, the book serves as an excellent guide for students of Fo and researchers alike in applying theoretical principles to an artist whose work is not always contained in scripted form, and therefore, demands more than dramatic analysis when it comes to interpretation.

Scuderi relies on previous research work done by Fo scholars such as Timothy Mitchell, Joseph Farrell, and Marisa Pizza, among others; on critical works written by Fo himself; on Fo's performances and television broadcasts; as well as on interviews he conducted with Fo and Franca Rame, Fo's wife and frequent collaborator. The work begins by situating Fo within the popular theatrical tradition, as a performer who finds his roots among the medieval *giullari*, later called *jongleurs* (roving popular performers); the Commedia dell'Arte; and *teatro minore*, a term for theatre stemming from popular, comic forms (12-14). After providing ample background information on Fo's childhood influences and early career moves, Scuderi focuses on *Mistero buffo*, the performance of *Comic Mysteries* which various Fo scholars (Mitchell, Pizza) pinpoint as a watershed in Fo's output. Whereas others note *Mistero buffo* as the starting point for a new and more subversive style, Scuderi emphasizes its continuity with Fo's upbringing among storytellers or *fabulatori*. Rather than connecting Fo to the popular tradition through Franca Rame, whose family has been in the traveling theatre profession for generations, Scuderi positions Fo himself as ancestor to the *giullarate* tradition, passed down to him from his grandfather.

The second chapter, "The Science of Framing," is devoted to theorizing the framing devices (that influence our way of seeing reality, in this case, performance) that Fo employs. Borrowing from Gregory Bateson, Richard Bauman and Erving Goffman, Scuderi provides a performance analysis of *Joban Padan a la descoberta de le Americhe* (1991). The anthropology-derived conceptual approach is useful in

describing the various experiential layers of a given performed moment. In the third chapter, Scuderi focuses on the components of the performance: the text, composition practice, improvisation, thematic content, and humor. The importance of humor and the political potential of laughter are subjects of the fourth and final chapter. It is Fo's use of laughter that garnered him scorn, often by the church, media (banning performances on Italian TV or radio between 1962-1977) or by political entities such as the U.S. (refusing him entrance between 1980-1986) (95). The power of humor, as Fo relates it, lies in its seemingly innocent potential to mirror reality albeit in magnified, altered form (91). Perhaps Scuderi's most important point relates to improvisation, which Fo incorporates in performance as well as during his process of generating materials. Scuderi makes the case that improvisation as a technique is useful to Fo in both solo (and heavily improved) and scripted pieces like *Joban Padan* (57, 63). Thereby, Scuderi firmly dismisses an inherent difference between Fo's monologue and play performances and suggests a common source for both of these in the popular tradition of improvisation.

Along with the verbal, textual, and oral codes implicit in Fo's practice is an iconic system that is highly useful for him in serving as a visually stimulating *cannovaccio* (the Commedia dell'Arte term for the abridged plot line from which actors generated live performances). This visual expression is evident in sketches, doodles or painted drawings, often accompanied with text, that Fo incorporates in his generation of monologues and plays as well as during the performances he delivers. Interstrewn throughout the book are illustrations that Fo provided on the occasion of his acceptance for the Nobel Prize. These drawings, much like a music score, indicate the mnemonic devices that Fo referred to during his performed acceptance speech. The illustrations also suggest the flexibility, in time and sequence, that Fo had while he "performed" one illustration or another. The visual element and the progression of the chapters lend themselves to this study of the popular performance tradition from which Fo emerged and help to formalize a mechanism of analyzing this work, which otherwise would be outside the domain of dramatic analysis. The inclusion of the visual materials, as well as the contextualization of scripted and performed materials make this book an illuminating approach to Fo's work for scholar and practitioner alike.

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