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# Toxic Authority and Theatrical Gaslighting: The Maniac's Madness as a Reflection of Systemic Psychosis in Dario Fo's Accidental Death of an Anarchist

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**Abstract:** The study concentrates on the remarkable connection between reality, madness, and authority in Dario Fo's genius literary work, *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*. The study pays much attention to the controversial thoughts such as "toxic authority" and "theatrical gaslighting." It examines the state's manipulation of truth for the sake of authority. Dario Fo uses an unexpected character, the Maniac, to perform the heroic position in the play. The Maniac is a "certified psychotic" who breaks into a police station and uncovers the authority's much deeper "systemic psychosis" by using his own insanity as a weapon. Regarding the literary analysis and political philosophy, the study proposes that the police station represents a microcosm of a modern society that takes fantasy to control the public. Also, it argues that Fo uses the comedian moments as subversive mirror to expose the inconsistencies of the hegemony. As well as, the study also focuses on the technique of the play to awake the audience's critical analysis of state-sponsored violence through the use of humor and Brechtian alienation. Finally, it clarifies that the madness and sanity are the only ways to represent truth in modern time where the ruling class are the ones who are actually insane.

**Keywords:** Madness, psychosis, theatrical gaslighting, the ruling class, toxic power.

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## Introduction

Dario Fo's *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, written in 1970, is one of the most important political plays of the twentieth century. To understand the play, the paper first looks at the dark history of Italy during the late 1960s. The period was known as the "Years of Lead," a time of great political tension and violence. In December 1969, a bomb went off in the Piazza Fontana in Milan, killing seventeen people. The police immediately arrested several anarchists, including a railway worker named Giuseppe Pinelli. Three days later, Pinelli died after falling from a fourth-floor window of the Milan police headquarters. The police claimed it was a suicide or an "accidental" fall, but the public was very suspicious. They believed the police had murdered him during a violent interrogation [1].

Dario Fo reacted to these bloody events by writing *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*. He aimed primarily to establish what is called a "theatre of intervention." Theatre of intervention is created to disclose reality for public that the ruling class try to bury forever. Dario Fo preferred to write a farce rather than a tragedy. In this regard, Fo intends to arise political issues behind using satire and humour in his play, as David L. Hirst mentions

"the most powerful political weapon in Fo's theatrical armoury is farce" (38). In addition, his technique is to highlight the contradictions or "grotesque" nature of power. He thinks that humour is an influential tool to unveil the real faces of the ruling class. The audience may notice that the story is about one death, but it tackles the systematic hierarchy of the authorities which is based on corruption and manipulation [2].

The paper argues that Dario Fo manifests the Maniac's character to reveal the "toxic authority" and "theatrical gaslighting" of the ruling class. Toxic authority is defined as a system misuses power to hurt and deceive the inhabitants rather than serving them. Theatrical gaslighting is a way based on falsehood to raise the scepticism in the people's eyes and perceptions. In *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, the police station represents a place to broadcast lies as truth. The main character, the Maniac, is incarnated to spend most of his life in sixteen mental institutions. The dramatist aims to use him as a tool to disclose the lies of the authority, which is represented by the police station. However, madness is a perfect weapon to reflect the systemic psychosis of the ruling class [3], [4].

The study includes some divisions. Starting with the literature review, it focuses on the papers of other researchers who have studied Fo's play with special reference to the character of the Maniac. Then, the theoretical framework discusses some concepts such as theatrical gaslighting, systemic psychosis, and Brechtian alienation. The analytical section comes third, it deals with the Maniac's role specifically, the roles of the policemen, and the task of the press. Lastly, the conclusion reaches some points such as the relevance between the play and the modern world controlled by the manipulators or gaslighters, and Fo's aim for using simple and ungrammatical language. It also reveals that real sanity is constructed inside the official institutions which control people rather than attributed to some individuals such as the Maniac [5], [6].

### Literature Review

Many academic papers have examined Fo's play *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* from various perspectives. The play heavily focuses on one of the prominent Italian historical events which is known as the 1969 Piazza Fontana bombing and the dubious death of Giuseppe Pinelli under police custody. These studies enable readers to capture different aspect of the playwright's intention. Most importantly, Tony Mitchell's *Dario Fo People's Court Jester* (1999) argues that Fo revives the role of jester which unique characteristic to express the reality freely to confront the power. He manifests the comic devises such as laughter, satire, and grotesque to target the political regimes featured by corruption, state authority, and social injustice. Meanwhile, David Hirst's book *Dario Fo and Franca Rame* claims that the validity of Dario Fo's political theatre arose from the combination of ancient comedy and modern activism. Antonella Scuderi also in her book *Dario Fo: Framing, Festival, and the Folkloric Imagination*, proposed that the strength of Dario Fo's style of revolutionary theatre is based heavily on medieval and folkloric performance traditions [1], [2], [7].

Fo's style of the drama associates comedy with grave politics. [A History of Italian Theatre](#) is edited by Joseph Farrell and Paolo Puppa published in 2006 by Cambridge University Press, examines the origins of Italian theatre, including how Dario Fo brought the ancient forms like [Commedia dell'Arte](#) and [common traditions](#), giving him a prominent position in modern Italian drama [8].

A remarkable study to analyze comedy as resistance is introduced by Ron Jenkins in *Subversive Laughter: The Liberating Power of Comedy* (1994). By applying the ethnography of playwrights such as Dario Fo and others, Jenkins claims that satire manifests as a keystone for cultural resilience and self-actualization, especially for the oppressed people. A main strategy of this actualization is comedy as a weapon to be performed intentionally to debunk all forms of power. Presenting the dominated authority as stupid, clumsy, or grotesque, the dramatic performance weakens the public's acquiescence to the ruling class. Jenkins posits that this collective laughter in the face of authority creates a temporary but

potent "liberated zone," empowering spectators through critique and fostering a shared sense of resilience. Thus, within this scholarly lineage, the act of making strong characters look foolish is not mere mockery but a calculated political and liberatory strategy [9].

Many academics debate the political messages of the drama. Tom Behan's 2000 book examines how the drama depicts the policemen's manipulating evidence. [Hatim Bendyane](#) shows how the drama exposes the way authority operates using concepts from philosopher Foucault. Other authors have looked at how the drama questions the way truth is hidden by the media [10], [11].

Others investigate the Maniac, the primary character. Daniela Bini (2010) details how he can safely speak the truth by acting mad. Using psychology ideas, Ellie Ragland (2016) examines how the character reveals issues within influential systems [12], [13].

In "the Performance of Power and the Power of Performance: Rewriting the Police State," Joylynn Wing examines Dario Fo's style to disclose the falsehood of the authorial hierarchy by devices of theatrical performance. Wing argues that Fo uncovers the police corruption and interrogates the fake narratives on the doubtful death of an anarchist through the techniques of farce, satire, and metatheatrical ones. The study insists that performance aims to be a powerful tool for political opposition, enabling Fo to challenge the narratives of the ruling class and provoke audience reflection on systemic inequalities. By fusing humor with subversive critique, *An Accidental Death of an Anarchist* subverts police state authority and gives voice to marginalized groups. Wing's version highlights the play's constant relevance in questioning truth and authority [14].

Natasha W. Vashisht from the University of Toronto at Mississauga publishes his paper under the title "Staging resistance matters! Deconstructing structures of power and oppression in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o and Micere Githae Mugo's *The Trial of Dedan Kimathi* and Dario Fo's *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*" in 2021. It classifies the two plays as radical "theatres of resistance" that unpack political authority and its historical fallacy. It establishes universal discourse from Africa to Europe, creating a framework for disposition against the centrality of power regardless of its ideology. In spite of their different contexts, they share something in common. On one hand, the African play praises epic to revive African history by restoring the centrality of popular agency. On the other hand, the European play applies satirical farce to disclose the corruption and deception of governmental institutions. Both playwrights instrumentally challenge the passivity of the audience, using meta-theatricality to disintegrate dramatic fantasy and provoke a critical eye. The study concludes that the selected plays serve as frameworks for employing resistance theatre to fortify the subalterns and catalyze subversion against oppressive authority [15].

Though a lot of research has been done, there is still more to investigate. Few studies examine how the drama relates to contemporary issues, including fake news and fake official documents. The ruling class always use their official lies to convince people by using the policemen as good performers. As well as those in charge, such as the policemen, are the slaves of their lies; in other words, they are helpless in the psychosis world. Therefore, the study aims to show that theatre shapes people's awareness, perception, and criticism to evaluate the system's authority. It helps to expose lies and corruption. It also calls for justice by punishing the corrupt ruling class.

### **The Theoretical Background**

The study heavily focuses on the unremarkable connection between the toxic power and gaslighting as revealed in Dario Fo's *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*. Fo argues that the connection manifested by those who occupy unrestricted power, using lies and deception to overcontrol people, leading them to suspect the actual truth. The central character of the play, the Maniac, uses madness as a disguise to expose the actual madness which is prevalent in untrustworthy governmental establishments. The study establishes

a theory to show the actual truth from different fields, such as theatre, politics, and psychology, applied in the play [3], [4].

Analysing *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* in depth requires a refined theoretical framework. It highlights the relation between power and madness in the play. The theoretical framework includes many concepts such as Toxic Authority, Theatrical Gaslighting, Systemic Psychosis, Brechtian Alienation, and the Grotesque.

The first concept is Toxic Authority. Naturally, authority means to defend people by law. However, it takes different directions to serve the ruling class. Therefore, Toxic Authority emerges to mean the ability to hide all the crimes to protect the ruling class at any cost. Jean Lipman-Blumen defines it as the systematic and constant misuse of power to control the masses by manipulation (19-20). In addition, Michel Foucault writes in his book *Discipline and Punish* that the ruling class uses the authorial institutions, such as prisons or police stations, to dominate the people's bodies and manipulate their minds, which he calls 'discipline' (194). As a result, the ruling class establishes a specific knowledge to justify the misuse of power over the individuals. The knowledge turns out to be negative or toxic to create a sphere characterised by injustice and cruelty to be performed legally [3], [11].

Theatrical Gaslighting comes as the second concept. It is a psychological term that emerges from Patrick Hamilton's play *Gas Light*. It is based on manipulation used by the ruling class to doubt people's perceptions of reality, memory, or sanity. Robin Stern, in his book *The Gaslight Effect*, mentions that the process of manipulation takes place between two sides. One represents the gaslighter who aims to preserve his sense of having power, and the other is the gaslightee whose reality is created by the former (15). In literature, specifically drama, the dramatists imply the gaslighting process theatrically to serve political aims, for instance, Shakespeare incarnates Claudius' character in *Hamlet* as a gaslighter to manipulate all characters by hiding his guilt. Therefore, all the characters are considered as gaslightees for believing Claudius' narrative. As a result, the power enables him to manipulate the characters and even the audience. Thus, the ruling class manipulate the people by creating a show to represent artificial truth [4].

Systemic Psychosis is the third concept for the theoretical study. Psychosis is "a serious mental illness that affects the whole personality" (Hornby 1217). It is the state when the individual is unable to differentiate between reality and fantasy. Commonly, people believe that psychosis affects individuals, but many scholars such as R.D. Laing claims that society as a whole is considered as mad. In his book *The Divided Self*, Laing refers to madness as a sane reaction to an insane society (11). He believes that the psychotic people are often the only ones who observe the truth of the insane world (12) [6], [16].

The last concept is Brechtian Alienation (or the *Verfremdungseffekt*). The German playwright Bertolt Brecht believes in the necessity of awaking the audience critically. He assures that they have to be alarmed by avoiding the indulgence in the events of the story or showing any kind of "empathy" toward the characters (Glahn 178). Therefore, he implies a technique to separate the audience from the characters by breaking the fourth wall [5].

It is essential for the theory to add the Grotesque as a literary style. The grotesque is a technique in which the writers combine extremely different realms in exaggerated way, for instance, mixing the fun with the horror, or the beautiful with the ugly (Kayser 79). In other words, they portray funny situations but it is mixed with bitterness as a dark humor to reflect the actual life. Their powerful technique aim to amuse the audience rather than to depress them [17].

In addition, the framework needs to mention the theory of Political Theatre as counter-narrative. In late of twentieth century, many thinkers claim that the mainstream media is directed by the ruling class. Therefore, theatre is a perfect alternative for the masses. It is a theatre for the people, with the people and by the people (Cited in Pavis 11). It is what Fo called theatre of intervention. The theatre presents the misuse of power by the ruling class against the ordinary people to disclose their manipulation in order to

protect rather than to harm them. The dramatists show that drama cannot be neutral. It is to praise the ruling class or condemn them. They incarnate the stage as a public trial and the audience is the judge [18].

To combine all the above concepts to show that *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* is a newspaper aimed to deconstruct the ruling hierarchy. On one hand, Toxic authority, gaslighting, systemic psychosis are interrelated. Toxic power uses gaslighting to lead people into systemic psychosis, they are unable to differentiate between the reality and fantasy. On the other hand, the Brechtian alienation and the grotesque humor awake the audience to observe the actual truth as the judges do at courts. The literary texts especially drama work as intellectual alarm to cultivate the masses from the hidden danger created by the ruling class.

In *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, Fo created the police station as an authority characterised by toxic power. The policemen show no reaction to knowing the truth behind the anarchist's death. All they want to protect is the fake narrative created by them. Therefore, their narrative spreads widely through the station by its power to include every individual in the falsehood. The audience can clearly notice that a fake narrative creates a system of fear in which the truth represents a threat. Naturally, lies are changeable depending on the narrator. The policemen on the stage start to narrate the anarchist's death differently by acting persuasively, creating a psychological whirlpool for the audience. Their manipulation and deception are the perfect way to stay in control. Fo incarnates the Maniac to expose their acting by madness. The Maniac represents a psychotic individual, but the authority represents the psychotic system. The authority loses its authenticity when reality becomes out of it reaches. Lies become official, and truth is undesirable. Even those in power are afraid of revealing the truth; therefore, they have to act perfectly. In other words, they are unable to differentiate between the lies and the truth because they have indulged in a swamp of fabrication. As a result, the Maniac's madness is necessary to differentiate between lies and truth. The Maniac usually breaks the "fourth wall" by addressing the lies of the ruling class to control the masses. He aims to deconstruct the gaslighting process by showing the politicians are just good actors in a fabricated play called the world. Fo encourages people to question and take action against the real authority. He also uses dark comedy to combine the stupidity of the policemen and their cruelty in killing an innocent man. His style is powerful to mix laughter with fear, bringing joy and enthusiasm to his audience. He aims to highlight the sickness of the authority by portraying the Maniac to play different roles characterised with authority, for instance, he plays the role of a judge. At the end of the play, Fo creates a public trial for the policemen by showing all the evidence to the audience. All these theories contribute to showing that *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* is not only a drama to be performed on the stage, but it is a tool to motivate people's consciousness.

### **Toxic Authority and the Theme of Madness in the *Accidental Death of an Anarchist***

The section of the analysis focuses mainly on the remarkable conflict between the psychosis system of the ruling class and the madness of the individual. In *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, Dario Fo portrays the Maniac to deconstruct the toxic authority of the officers inside the police station by revealing their use of theatrical gaslighting to keep their authority. This section analyses the play as a whole, highlighting the Maniac's roles, the attitudes of the policemen, and the duty of the journalists [1].

*Accidental Death of an Anarchist* is a farce written in 1970 as a response to critical events unfolding in Italy in the late 1960s and early 1970s when Politicians who were voted into Italy's parliament had much to answer for. The Italian working class suffered a lot due to the dangerous working conditions, long hours, low pay, expensive and uninhabitable housing, and poor benefit packages. Mobilising, the working classes began to march and strike. Left-wing organisations flourished and gained power, including those on the Far

Left, favouring revolution over reform. The autumn of 1969 in Italy is known as the "Hot Autumn" of working-class and student protests, as unrest had reached a height. On October 15, fifty thousand workers demonstrated in Milan, and on November 28, one hundred thousand engineers demonstrated in Rome. Other disturbances and changes were afoot as well. It was the time, for example, of feminist agitation, so that in November, a law legalizing divorce in Italy was passed. At the same time, 173 bomb attacks occurred in Italy in the space of little more than a year during this time [10].

The mentioned Italian situation above encourages Fo to write *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* as he believes that theatre is a mighty contributor to political and social change to criticize the 1970s ruling class in Italy. His inspiration comes from a real event that happened in 12<sup>th</sup> December 1969, when an anarchist railway worker, Giuseppe Pinelli, was arrested for allegedly bombing the Agricultural Bank in Milan, which killed sixteen innocent people. Following the bombing, the fascist political party, the Italian Social Movement, rallied to the cause, denouncing the existence of a "red terror." The public was terrified, and the police swept the city, rounding up many Socialist, Communist and Anarchist activists. Though Pinelli was a well-known pacifist, he was interrogated for four days until he "fell" from a window at the police station and died. The death was deemed an "accident." The same day, another anarchist - a dancer by profession - was arrested; he was suspected of being the one really responsible for the bomb in Milan. The investigation of the death of the anarchist in Milan was filed away in the archives, and the anarchist dancer was proven innocent after three years in jail. Public pressure was frequently exerted on authorities to reopen the investigation of the anarchist Pinelli's death in Milan, but they kept postponing it [19].

In *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, the Maniac is the protagonist, while the ruling class is the antagonist. Fo incarnates the Maniac to have mental issues who is certified as a psychotic with special madness and has been in many mental hospitals. He suffers from histomania, in which he is obsessed with historical figures exaggeratedly as he indulges in playing various roles. For instance, he disguises himself as a surgeon, a captain, a bishop and a marine engineer (126). He also disguises himself during the course of the play as a judge, a bishop, and a forensic expert. All the mentioned roles enjoy a kind of authority to represent ruling class. By playing these role, the Maniac reveals that the state itself is just a kind of acting. Dario Fo creates the Maniac as a professional actor using his madness as a tool to disclose the theatrical gaslighting of the state. They manipulate people's thinking through interrogation or telling lies as the Maniac mentions "... being a policeman does funny things to the brain..." (130) [14].

The play opens with interrogation of the Maniac, who is accused of several acts of impersonation, by inspector Bertozzo in the police station. Frustrated by Maniac's smart answers in defending himself, he mentions that he has been arrested twelve times but never found guilty (126). Bertozzo admires the Maniac's intelligence to be a way from all the charges, therefore, he promises him to have a Malicious charge (126). In this regard, Fo reveals deliberately how toxic authority accuse the innocent people to be guilty by fabrication. After that Bertozzo forces the Maniac out of the office and leaves the room to deal with another issue. In Bertozzo's absence Maniac goes back to the office and tears the charge papers and robs his medical record. His reaction represents a clear resistance against the misuse of the power. At the same time, there is a phone call from Inspector Pissani. Answering the phone call Maniac gets to know a [judge](#) is due at the [police station](#) to re-investigate the case of death of the [anarchist](#) (135-137). It gives him the idea to impersonate the judge. Successfully accomplishing the task, he makes the police to re-enact the events. During the course, a woman journalist who had been expected for an interview on the death of anarchist join them. Going through several impersonations, the Maniac, brings up many political and revealing issues. Toward the end of drama his identity is revealed by inspector Bertozzo, but he manages to leave the place (as inferred from the

text, though not directly mentioned) with a tape record of the whole conversations which reveal police corruption [15], [9].

In the course of the story, the play brings up stories about warrantless wire taps, abuse of prisoners at Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo Bay, and hundreds of allegations of police brutality worldwide, which showing toxic power, tells that sometimes those in power cannot be trusted to act in the best interest of the people. Being a criticism of oppressive forces in society. The play discusses some major issues; toxic authority uses gaslighting to deceive the audience while Fo implies the maniac's madness as Britannia Alienation and the grotesque to disclose the harmful plot with reference to lies and fear. He encourages for reforming by revolution to replace the ruling class.

Inside the police station, the Maniac mentions that he has been arrested many times as he gets familiar with the situation there. At this time, he notices that the policemen are in a state of panic. They are hesitated about the investigation of the anarchist's death. It is a good chance for him to take the advantage immediately of their fear. At the same time, the Maniac shows interests in psychiatry (127). His plan is to pretend as a high-ranking judge named Malipiero. The officers are blind to ask for his identification due to their worries. It represents a clear remark of the systemic psychosis in which they show great respect for the uniform rather than the person himself due to power hierarchy. The Maniac acts as a reflection for them. As a judge, he uses their toxic authority which is characterised with rudeness, aggression, and unpredictability. Ironically, the officers' respond is accompanied with obedience and fear without noticing that they are interrogated by a madman. It proves that the world is insane and madness is the only sane way to deal with.

On the stage, the audience notices clearly that there is no logic or justice inside the police station; therefore, it is a psychotic space. The officers show no interest in the truth; they only care about official documents. The three main characters, such as Inspector Bertozzo, Inspector Pisani, and the Superintendent, are in the whirlpool of psychosis. They insist on lying about the anarchist's death without any touch of reality. They used to imagine a world where an anarchist could accidentally fall out of a window during a friendly conversation. The officers constantly change their narrative regarding the anarchist's death. Sarcastically, they keep arguing about whether the window was open or closed. As well as, they argue about whether the anarchist's shoe was one or two. Their narrative is based on small details to reveal that their reality is falling apart. They suffer from institutional delirium. They are in a serious dilemma searching for a persuasive narrative to convince the Maniac and the audience as well. Unexpectedly, they believe anything the Maniac tells them without questioning. It reveals the sickness of the system. The system prefers lies best rather than the truth, but eventually the truth will be revealed. Absurdly, the police lacks sense where the officers forget their roles and start narrating the story from their imagination.

One of the essential scenes of the play is when the Maniac disguised as the judge forcing the officers to reenact the night event of the death. The process of re-enacting is a perfect example of theatrical gaslighting. According to the Maniac, the police's narrative was unconvincing and boring. They need to make it more human and enjoyable. He takes the role of a theatre director who attempts to fix a bad play.

Under his supervision, the officers perform a new narrative to represent the truth as they claim. They insist that they had a friendly conversation with the anarchist. They claim to create a friendly atmosphere as if he is home by telling him jokes. Unbelievably, they share some songs about humanity with him. In this regard Fo uses dark comedy to mix funny moments with bitterness. It reveals that the ruling class can easily rewrite history. At the same time, the officers believe their lies, it is hard for them to recognize lies from reality. They deceive their own memories by gaslighting, therefore, they have to use a new theatrical narrative to represent the truth. By using power through disguise, the Maniac perfectly achieves the role of a director to show the ridiculous and the insane world of the policemen. He also forces them to act their role in front of the audience to disclose their

lies. He proves that the official truth is only a narrative lacking the truth to be changed at any time or any situation.

Dario Fo provides the Maniac a psychological manipulation, to enable him to manipulate policemen. Thus, he gaslights the gaslighters. All the time, the officers are good gaslighters to manipulate the suspects making them feel confused, guilty, and insane. But the Maniac uses their tricks and tactics against them. Now, they feel confused, guilty, and insane. Fo insists that power can change things upside down in which the Maniac interrogates those who used to interrogate others.

Fo manifests insane rationality and logic in his play to trap the policemen. For instance, the Maniac asks them to admit truth for the public, surely, people will forgive them. He convinces them people value a confession because it gives humanistic characterisations for the officers. He successfully creates a confused and hesitated situation leading them to admit real and fake crimes without realizing the truth. As a result, they are in a state of total mental collapse. He tortures them psychologically in a way that they are unable to know what is real and what a joke is. Therefore, they ask the Maniac about the truth. At the end of the scene, the Maniac achieves an ultimate victory by turning the toxic authority into a group of confused and frightened individual who are unable even to remember their own names.

Dario Fo tailored his play to focus on the fall of the anarchist. He provides a dramatic space for the Maniac to analyse physically the anarchist's fall. Fo believes that science shows conclusive evidences to solve the mentioned crime. Logically, the Maniac questions the possibility of jumping a man out of a window in the presence of three strong policemen in the room. As well as, he continues asking many questions such as the anarchist's scream while he is jumping and his body was away from the wall under the window. The Maniac's questions encourage people to question the logic of the ruling class.

In the real life, people have to believe the state's narrative and its logic. It is similar to the situation of the anarchist's death in which the state claims that he is died accidentally or by committing a suicide. In the play, the Maniac proves that the state's logic is psychotic. It requires ignoring the scientific laws of gravity and the laws of psychoanalysis. By studying the fall through physics, the Maniac proves that the officer's narrative is only a fantasy. Mockingly, Dario Fo implies the grotesque image of the falling body to ridicule the official narrative of the officers to narrate the anarchist's suicide. He reaches that the anarchist was actually murdered. In this regard, the analysis turns to be highly crucial because it relates the theatrical performance with the scientific laws of the death. By breaking the fourth wall, it awakes the audience that behind all the comic scenes, somebody has paid the bill by his life.

As the study mentioned earlier, the Maniac suffers from a psychological disorder known as *histromaina*. Therefore, he uses to disguise several times as a Bishop, and a forensic expert. Each time, he targets the policemen from different corners such as their morality and science. It leads that the many official institutions such as court, churches, and even scientific establishments support the toxic power of the ruling class.

As the play progresses, the Maniac reveals that all the mentioned institutions are included in the psychotic system. All of them used to act by using their own narratives to hide the truth. For instance, the Bishop usually mentions forgiveness to manipulate people. By using the date, the scientists hide the violence and the cruelty of the state. The Maniac plays all these roles to assure that the world is a big play directed by the ruling class. He acquires his power from the multi-layered performance. He is not only a character in an ordinary play, but he represents all the revolutionary people around the world who challenge the whole system. He declares a way to deconstruct the toxic power of the state is by realizing all the fake masks and destroy them one by one.

Dario Fo divided his play into two acts. Due to the significance of the Maniac's role of revealing the truth for public, he uses the first act for the confrontation between the Maniac and the policemen. At the same time, he believes that press plays an important role

in change the public's consciousness in which the second act is provided for it. Fo incarnates the character of Maria Feletti as a journalist to represent the press. Maria Feletti works alongside with the Maniac for analysing the theatrical gaslighting. Her task is to find out the truth by asking questions to the policemen concerning the accidental death of the anarchist. Albeit, she is directly influenced by the psychotic atmosphere of the police station to be included within the performance. But she is highly intellectual to differentiate between reality and fantasy.

On the contrary, the Maniac starts to be in the police's side by changing his role immediately. Now, he disguises as a forensic expert with a glass eye, a wooden leg, and a hook for a hand. He clearly reflects the grotesque image. His pretention represents the broken truth of the ruling class. The Press symbolizes fear and terror for the policemen due to Feletti's role in exposing them to the public. On their side, the Maniac takes the charge to calm them down by showing that he is able to manage the situation. His plan is to use his talent in manipulation to turn the interview into a comic scene. He successfully convinces the policemen to cooperate, but he leads them into more lies.

Feletti's questions are based on logical and scientific facts. The first question concerns the ambulance's arrival before the fall as Feletti states:

But the most disturbing detail, on which I would appreciate an explanation, is the fact that, again among the materials handed over by the judge who shelved the inquest, there is no sign of the cassette tape that recorded the precise time of the phone call that rang for the ambulance ... a phone call which came from here, at Central Police Headquarters, and which, according to the people at the ambulance station, occurred at two minutes before midnight.

At the same time, the journalists who were present at the scene all stated that the fall happened at precisely three minutes past midnight ... In other words, the ambulance was called five minutes before the anarchist went out of the window. (179)

The question above reveals the truth that the officers have arranged for the death of the anarchist. She calculates all the minutes before and after the fall to prove that the anarchist was murdered deliberately.

The second question deals with Forensic evidences. Feletti mentions that some scars were found on the back of the victim's neck as she said, "... what about the bruises on the back of the dead man's neck, for which there has not as yet been any satisfactory explanation" (180). Certainly, the police's situation is difficult and they have to confess about the crime they have committed. But the Maniac supports them to use the theatrical gaslighting by showing the national security as an excuse to shut up Feletti. Their claim gives them the authority to accuse the Press for being naïve or unpatriotic to intervene with national security of the state. It shows how the ruling class exploits the Press to spread its propaganda of psychosis. As well as the Maniac justifies the narrative of the policemen to convince Feletti and the audience by saying:

It is rumoured that during the anarchist's final interrogation, at just a couple of minutes to midnight one of the officers present started to get impatient, and he came over and gave him a mighty wallop on the back of the neck ... Relax, Inspector ... The result of this was that the anarchist was half-paralysed and started struggling for breath ... So they decided to call an ambulance. In the meantime, in an attempt to revive him, they opened the window, put the anarchist in front of it, and made him lean out a bit for the cool night air to revive him ... ! Apparently, there was a misunderstanding between the two officers supporting him ... as often happens in these cases, each of them thought the other one was holding him ... 'You got him, Gianni?' 'You got him, Luigi?' And bomp, down he went ... (181)

Finally, the Maniac succeeds to convince the journalist that the death was accident. Therefore, Feletti insists only to change the cause of death by accident rather than suicide (182). Fo creates Feletti's as an honest journalist searching for the truth, but the toxic authority forces her to be included within the gaslighting world. Thus, the state takes

media as an excellent ground to perform its innocence. Surprisingly, the two questions are the real questions to be asked in Pinelli's case.

In *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, Fo offers his audience two choices for the end of his play to choose one of them. After revealing the truth, the Maniac has recorded the trial on a tape recorder. Clearly, he has conclusive evidences of the police's corruption, violence, and manipulation. Now, he is ready to offer the choice for the audience. The mentioned event is the Brechtian technique which puts an end for the illusion and gives the audience a chance to think.

In his first ending, Fo shows it is a stupidity to save the corrupted officers from death. He describes Maria Feletti as she believes in human rights and the justice, therefore, she applies the justice by saving the policemen from an explosion managed by the Maniac. In return, they arrested and handcuffed her to the window aiming to kill her. Obviously, the toxic authority is a destructive force even for those who offer help. In this regard, Fo declares that deconstruction and punishment are the only solutions for the state rather than reforming. The ruling class constructs rules to people rather than saving them. Fo's view is a very pessimistic which reveals the psychosis of power is unquestionable.

In the second choice, the explosion killed all the corrupted policemen and Maria Feletti has no chance to intervene to save them. By killing them and destroying the psychotic state, the Maniac breaks the fourth wall to talk to the audience directly. He presents the two endings asking them which one they prefer. The two endings represent the real and revolutionary worlds. People have to choose to change their miserable situation where they are treated as insects.

The last choice is a good example of theatre of intervention. It transforms the audience from being passive viewers into political contributors. Fo believes that revolution is the only way to stop the systemic psychosis of the ruling class. The gaslighting process and the toxic authority are interrelated. Therefore, the play awakens the people by providing them the truth to believe that they have to fight to get the truth. As well as, they have to use madness as the only way to be sane in insane world.

Dario Fo incarnates the Maniac as a mirror, a director, and a rebel. He frees him by providing him madness (certified psychotic) as proper way to express his views without a constraint. The state treats him an insane. Therefore, he can do and say anything he wants. As a results, he reaches unreachable level to mock the ruling class (the judge, the bishop, and the policemen) without any hesitation. His madness elevated him to be the most dangerous individual inside the police station. He is the only to be considered as uncontrollable person inside a society ruled by the ruling class.

The play also shows that the policemen are only slaves to the ruling hierarchy. They have to lie to survive under the psychosis system. They are unlike the Maniac, they are characterised with fear and hesitation by obeying the ruling class. As well as, they used to be afraid of the press to reveal the truth. But freedom is specifically for the Maniac who uses his madness to unveil the truth of the ruling class. He proves that greatness of the ruling class is only related with their titles and uniforms. It is the most important point the playwright tries to reveal. It destroys the greatness of the state by showing its reality for being toxic and psychotic on a big stage. All the characters the Maniac plays their roles such as the judged, the bishop and the officer are only actors to perform well as the director desires. In last scene of the play, the audience realize that they have to laugh at the policemen rather than afraid them. In this regard, Fo proves that grotesque strips the toxic authority its power. However, the play can trigger the spark of revolution in the audience's minds.

Finally, Dario Fo deliberately manifests a very simple language, mixed with ungrammatical sentences. He wants his play to reach the working class. He also uses refined language to reflect the ruling class to hide their corruption. For instance, the policemen utter some phrases such as national security or administrative procedures, but the Maniac reacts sarcastically with jokes and comic performance.

Dario Fo implies the clash of languages to show the conflict between the ruling class and the masses. On one hand, the psychosis system uses the refined language for gaslighting process and confusion. On the other hand, the Maniac uses simple and ungrammatical language to clarify and disclose the lies of the state. In this regard, the audience have to trust their minds rather than the official language of the state. Ultimately, Fo reaches his aim manifesting theatrical gaslighting as a way to awake the audience to find out the truth with the lies of the state. Thus, *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* is a good example to teach people to evaluate the world critically.

### Conclusion

The study concludes that Dario Fo's *Accidental Death of an Anarchist* is a concrete critique of the modern systems. It reveals that the playwright implies toxic authority and theatrical gaslighting to disclose the systemic psychosis of the ruling class which is represented by the police station. Fo incarnates the Maniac as a certified psychotic to show that the ruling class keeps their power by manipulation and lies.

The play primarily is based on the madness of the Maniac. By performing the insanity, the Maniac is capable of reflecting the toxic power of the ruling class. He plays the role of a director a play-within-play inside the police station to present unexpected trial by forcing the officers to act their lies. He shows their gaslighting to obvious to the audience. The audience can easily realize that the police station becomes a psychotic space in which the policemen use the theatrical gaslighting as official documents to hide the truth. The audience also notice that the officers as gaslighters who try constantly to manipulate the public by changing their narratives concerning the death of the an anarchist.

The study shows that Fo implies Brechtian technique and grotesque humor to trigger the people's activity and their critical eye. He employs two endings as a proper way to call for revolution. It encourages people to rebel against the toxic authorities which use their theatrical gaslighting to deceive the public. Finally, the study reaches that Fo suggests in his play that sanity is the perfect way to rebel against the societies are built on lies.

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