

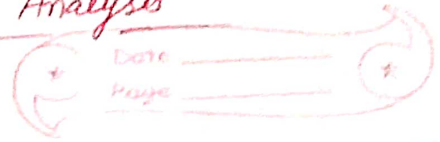
M.A (English)

3rd Sem

C.C - 11

# Accidental Death of an anarchist

An Analysis



Accidental Death of an anarchist (1970) is one of the most popular play written by Italian playwright Dario Fo. Considered a classic of 20<sup>th</sup> century theater, it has been performed across the world in more than forty countries. Dario Fo is one of Italy's most important and well known literary figures, along with his wife and long time collaborator, Franca Rame. He was born in San Giano, Italy, on March 24, 1926, the son of Felice (a railroad stationmaster) and Pina (Rota) Fo. His works peppered with criticisms of assassinations, corruption, organized crime, racism, Roman Catholic theology and war. For his contribution in literature, he got was awarded the prestigious Nobel Prize in 1997.

The play 'Accidental Death of an Anarchist' (1970) responds to events unfolding in Italy in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Generally it looks at police corruption and suspicions regarding the government's collusion in this corruption. More specifically, it addresses the actual death of an anarchist who was being held in police custody following the bombing of a Milan bank that killed sixteen people and wounded about ninety. The police asserted that the anarchist's death was a suicide, that the man threw himself from a fourth-floor window in despair at being found out for his crime. At the subsequent inquest, the presiding judge declared the death not a suicide but an accident. Most Italians believed that the death



was the result of overly harsh interrogation techniques, if not a case of outright murder on the part of the interrogators.

Accidental Death of an Anarchist is mainly about police corruption, underscored by the play's focus on impersonation, infiltration, and double-talk. A fast-talking major character, the Maniac, infiltrates a police headquarters. Posing as an investigating judge, he tricks the policemen into contradicting themselves and admitting that they are part of a cover up involving the death of an anarchist.

In infiltrating police headquarters by misrepresenting himself (impersonation), the Maniac reminds audiences of how most political groups in Italy, particularly left wing-groups, were infiltrated by police agents who acted as informers. The Maniac's flip-flop of point of view and statement achieves much the same effect as his impersonations do. His confusing speech making leads to the police contradicting themselves, so that the Maniac, in all of his deceptions and distortions, is a precise reflection of what the play is designed to expose.

The play focuses upon many themes like Revolution versus Reform, Corruption, Violence, madness etc. Dario Fo is a radical writer and Accidental Death of an Anarchist advocates revolution. Wholesale and widespread corruption is challenging for any society to overcome. At the time Fo wrote the play, Italy was locked in a struggle between the establishment and those who wanted radical change. The question of change by reforming and improving the existing systems bit by bit, or completely



dismantling society through revolution and rebuilding from the ground up, is talked through the discourse of Felletti and The Maniac in Act Two.

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Maniac: - While you Communist Party journalists pass yourselves off as champions of truth and peddle your reformist illusions in the capitalist press, I'm supposed to defend democracy by volunteering for the mortuary slab! Why not ask yourself, Miss Felletti, what sort of democracy requires the services of dogs such as these?”

It is political corruption and ambition of the authorities to keep their absolute power that Fo is concerned with. The ludicrous antics of the police trying to defend their corrupt and unbelievable account of the 'suicide' of the anarchist represent the establishment, struggling to maintain their status in the face of increasing scrutiny, public scepticism and anger. In the play, the characters become bigger than the sum of their parts and take on the mantle of the pillars of society they represent.