Antonio Scuderi

The Gospel According to Dario Fo

For over half a century the Italian Nobel playwright and performer Dario Fo (b. 1926) developed a theatre that challenged the authority of hegemonic culture, while promoting the validity and dignity of folk and popular cultures. In his satire of the Catholic Church, Fo presents the paternalistic God the Father as an instrument of suppression, while showing Jesus as being closer to the hearts of the folk. His references to apocryphal gospels – the gospels of early Christianity that were rejected by the Roman Church – play into this schema. In two of his plays, *First Miracle of the Christ Child* (from *Tale of a Tiger and Other Stories*) and *Johan Padan Discovers America*, Fo borrows elements from various apocryphal texts as a basis to underscore his father/son dichotomy, and to contest hegemonic dominance. At the same time, he presents a human Jesus who is more akin to the Jesus of certain apocrypha than to official gospels. Antonio Scuderi is Professor of Italian at Truman State University in Missouri, where he founded the Italian programme. His interdisciplinary articles on Italian performance traditions have been published in leading journals of theatre, folklore and literary studies, and in essays for books. He is the author of *Dario Fo and Popular Performance* (Legas, 1998) and co-editor of *Dario Fo: Stage, Text, and Tradition* (Southern Illinois UP, 2000). His latest book, *Dario Fo: Framing, Festival, and the Folkloric Imagination* (Lexington Books, 2011), examines the influence of concepts derived from folk culture, anthropology, and Gramscian Marxism on the development of Fo's theatrical praxis.

Key terms: apocryphal gospels. Italian theatre, popular performance, Gramscian Marxism.

OF THE MANY THEMES that define the socio-political theatre of Dario Fo, two in particular have consistently played an essential role. One is an undying support of folk and popular cultures, which explains why he has based his performance techniques to a great extent on popular forms. The other is a stinging criticism of the Catholic Church as a powerful and exploitative institution. Both of these themes are informed by his interpretation of the writings of Antonio Gramsci (1891–1937). Often developed with an Italian context specifically in mind, Gramsci's Marxist theories had a tremendous influence on Italian leftist intellectuals of Fo's generation. His renowned theory of hegemony was an attempt to explain how the ruling classes keep the working classes in a subservient position by convincing them of their cultural inferiority.

Fo invokes Gramsci in his crusade to uphold and preserve popular culture and includes the Church as part of the hegemonic power structure.[1] Where one might expect Gramsci to lean towards a general rejection of religion, as was the tendency of many communists of his day, he understood that it was too important to Italian folk culture just to be dismissed.[2] Thus what we find in Fo's theatre is a tension between the religion of the folk, with its roots in pre-Christian culture, and the historical hegemony exerted by the Catholic Church. This tension is often manifested as a dichotomy between the folk's affinity for the nurturing and humane Jesus, and the Church's formidable image of the all-powerful, paternalistic God the Father as an instrument of terrorization. As Fo explains in his introduction to *Mistero Buffo*, 'That is why God the Father is so hated, because he represents those in power. It is he who bestows crowns and privileges; while Jesus Christ is loved, for it is he who comes to earth to try and give back spring and above all dignity.'[3]

Considering Fo's penchant for challenging Church authority along with his desire to uphold popular forms of Christianity, it

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logically follows that on more than one occasion he has referred to non-canonical gospels. These early Christian apocrypha, as scholars tend to designate them,[4] circulated among the first Christians for several centuries after Christ, and comprised the holy scriptures of various sects. In 325 CE Emperor Constantine called for a Council at the city of Nicaea on the Turkish coast. There the Christian bishops discussed and agreed on common statements of beliefs.[5] This began the process of developing an official and definitive canon. Later in the fourth century, when Christianity was established as the official state religion of the Roman Empire, prominent bishops came together to determine which writings were orthodox (right belief) and which would be rejected as heretical (false belief). Specifically these decisions were made at the Council of Hippo (393 CE), with the participation of St Augustine, and at the Council of Carthage (397 CE).[6]

It was decided that the canonical scriptures would include certain books of the Old Testament and 27 books that would officially comprise the New Testament.

> What then of the other books . . . the ones that did not come to form part of the New Testament? For the most part they were suppressed, forgotten, or destroyed – in one way or another lost, except insofar as they were mentioned by those who opposed them, who quoted them precisely in order to show how wrong they were.[7]

Through various discoveries, spanning from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries, some of the apocryphal gospels resurfaced and forced a rethinking of the history of early Christianity.

The Proto- and Infancy Gospels

There are various reasons why these texts complement the themes of Fo's theatre and fit well into its overriding challenge to authority. Condemned by official culture, these non-canonical scriptures can only be defined as part of folk culture or even counter-culture. And by giving them some form of credence, Fo puts them at the same level as those comprising the canon, thus suggesting they are all equally part of Christian folklore. As we shall see, some of these writings present a more human and personal image of Jesus, while others (such as the Infancy Gospel of James, addressed below) may have been written primarily for entertainment.

Dario Fo's principal modes of theatrical performance are the satirical farce (e.g., *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*) and the *giullarata* (e.g., *Mistero Buffo*). The latter is a solo performance, based on the itinerant street performers of the Middle Ages (*giullari* or jongleurs). One of his most important *giullarate* is *Tale of a Tiger and Other Stories*. First performed in 1978, it features a long centrepiece sketch, 'Tale of a Tiger', followed by three shorter sketches: 'First Miracle of the Christ Child', 'Daedalus and Icarus', and 'The Sacrifice of Isaac'. In the introduction to 'First Miracle', Fo explains:

> The second part of the show is dedicated to apocryphal gospels. 'Apocryphal gospels' are collections of stories tied to the life of Jesus and of the apostles, which in the second and third centuries were the basis of palaeo-Christian literature. . . . The type of apocryphal gospel that we will be dealing with on this occasion are called 'proto-gospels'.[8]

The proto-gospels or infancy gospels seem to have been intended to fill in the chronological gaps in the four gospels of the New Testaments, specifically before the birth of Christ and of Christ's childhood. There are two primary extant proto-gospels, known as the Proto-Gospel of James (*P-G James*) and the Infancy Gospel of Thomas (*I-G Thomas*).[9]

P-G James tells of the birth and life of Mary, up to and including the birth of Jesus. Considering its origins and diffusion,

> it must have been in circulation soon after 150 CE. The book was enormously popular in later centuries, and played a significant role in the pictorial art of the Middle Ages.[10]

References to *I-G Thomas* and its stories also go back to the second century. It is difficult to determine when it was first written down, and it may have very well circulated first in the oral tradition.[11] Although 'First Miracle' begins with the Christmas story, Fo does not

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take much from *P-G James*. On the other hand, the opening story of *I-G Thomas* and its overall register are central to Fo's play.

The New Testament gospels provide very little about Jesus's life, prior to his baptism. The exception is the story in Luke (2:41–52) that tells of the pilgrimage to the Jerusalem Temple when Jesus was twelve. 'Other stories of Jesus's youth, however, were soon in circulation. Behind many of these legends lay a fundamental question: if Jesus was a miracle-working Son of God as an adult, what was he like as a child?'[12]

I-G Thomas presents a Christ child who is at times mischievous and even vindictive, using his miraculous powers to strike down those who oppose or annoy him, displaying 'nothing distinctively Christian at all',[13] though he seems to mature as he progressively uses his powers for healing and resurrection. These stories are part of an ancient narrative tradition that recount a hero's childhood, whereby 'the first public words and deeds of the hero were thought to be indicative of his status and future career'.[14] However, 'for modern readers it is difficult to decide whether such stories were meant as serious accounts of Jesus's early life or simply as speculative and entertaining stories of the youthful Son of God'.[15]

'First Miracle of the Christ Child'

Fo's 'First Miracle' begins with a grotesque send-up of the classic Christmas story, with little or no reference to the proto-gospels. The three Magi are presented as farcical and stereotypical: a grumpy older man, who complains about how the long ride has taken a toll on his backside; a blond-haired, blue-eyed, golden boy, who always smiles and never says much; and a black Magus, who constantly sings an inane song about riding his camel. Most of the dialogue involves farcical interaction between the grumpy elderly Magus and the annoying black one.

The appearance of a huge angel (with a great ribbon, designating him as 'Angel!') announcing the birth of the Christ, frightens the shepherds' flocks. The angry shepherds vent their anger at him:

> Hey! Are you crazy?! You frightened all the sheep! . . . If only you'd go and crash into the mountain so that your halo gets rammed down to your neck, with all your feathers scattered everywhere. Turkey![16] (p. 85)

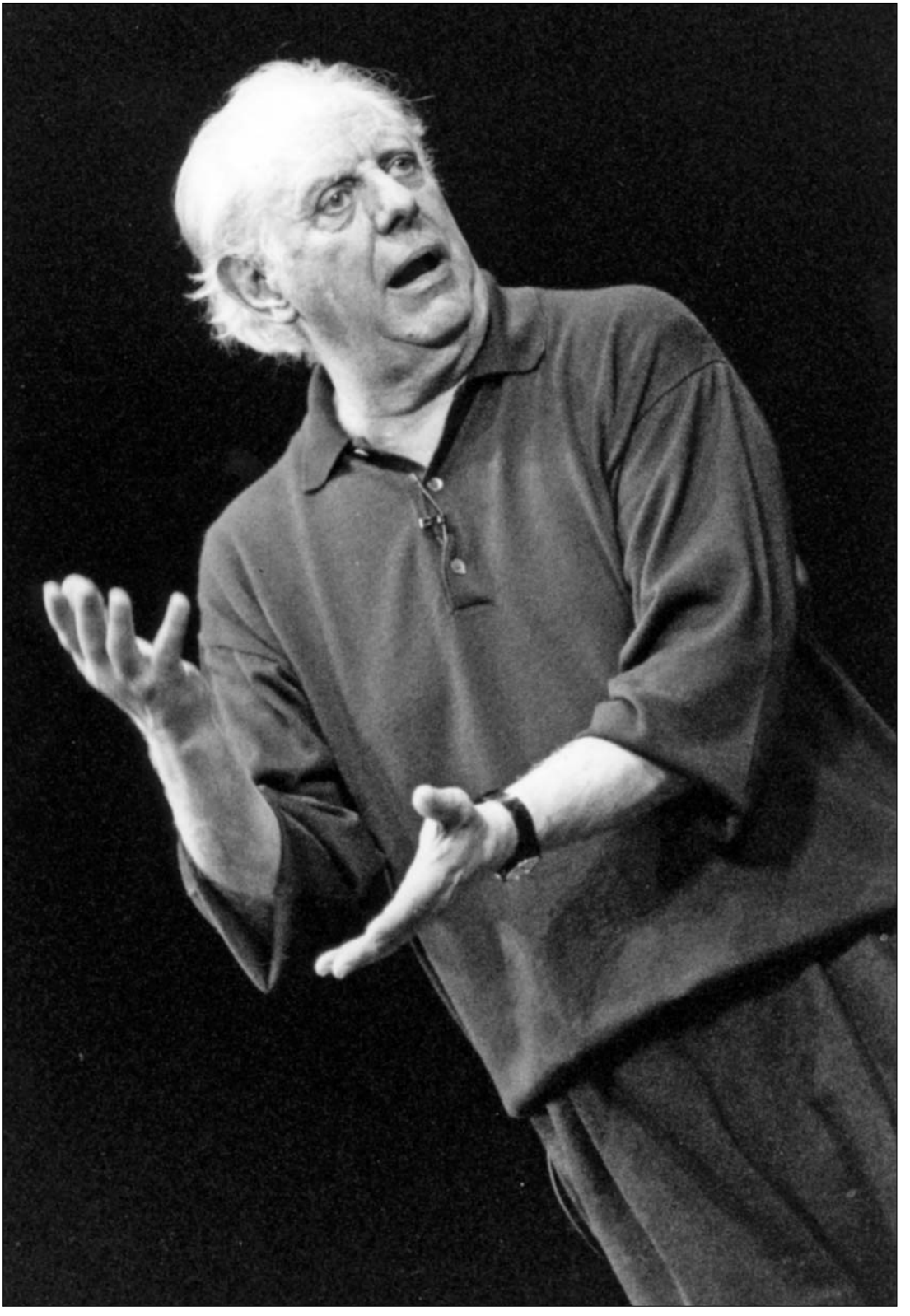
Until the narrative gets to the part based on *I-G Thomas*, it mainly tells the Christmas story in a broad and farcical register. Although it is not the focus of the present study, it should be mentioned that Fo intends to avoid humour for its own sake. Often this sort of parody is intended to contextualize the subject matter in terms of grotesque, carnival 'folk laughter', as cogently expounded by Mikhail Bakhtin.[17]

To underscore the cruelty of God the Father in 'First Miracle', Fo dwells on the massacre of the innocents (p. 87–95), which was a sketch in the original *Mistero Buffo*, albeit in a serious register.[18] He begins to present his typical socio-political messages when the narrative gets to the flight to Egypt. In a new city, the holy family shares the plight of migrants struggling to survive. Mary takes to washing clothes, while Joseph wanders all day with his tools, unable to find work.

In the evenings the parents return home tired and discouraged, while the child Jesus, dirty with snot running down his nose, complains of hunger (p. 97). Here the register remains farcical. When Jesus is reprimanded for complaining, he responds with the anachronistic 'Eh, la Madonna!'[19] and when Mary tells Jesus, 'Make the sign of the cross!' she corrects herself, 'No, wait. It's a little too early' (p. 99).

The child Jesus is treated as an outsider and ostracized by the other children, who refuse to play with him and call him 'Terrone!' (p. 99) – a disparaging term, based on the word *terra* (soil), referring to southern Italians, many of whom migrated in great numbers to northern Italian cities during the 1950s and 1960s. Fo uses Jesus's desire to play with other children to segue into the first story from *I-G Thomas*. This opening tale is the most fanciful and famous of the proto-gospels. It tells of five-year-old Jesus at play with many children by a brook. First Jesus creates pools and miraculously cleans the water. Then from the clay he fashions twelve

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Dario Fo performing *Johan Padan Discovers America.*

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birds (sometimes translated as 'sparrows'). But it is the Sabbath, when both work and play are forbidden, and 'a certain Jew' tells Joseph of his son's activities. Joseph goes to the brook and confronts his son. 'But Jesus clapped his hands and cried to the sparrows: "Off with you!" And the sparrows took flight and went away chirping.'[20]

The idea of imagining the child Jesus at play gives the proto-gospels a human touch. His use of divine power to make the birds fly away, thus giving his earthly father nothing to complain about, brings the miracle working down to the level of child psychology (or strategies for getting out of trouble). But in 'First Miracle' Fo contextualizes this episode into his story of the ostracized child: 'And yet, to have the possibility to play, to make merry, to use his imagination with other children, Jesus performed a miracle' (p. 99). Jesus is presented as the outsider, who, craving acceptance and the opportunity to play, uses his divine powers to become popular with the other children.

Since they are in a city, Fo has a fountain as the water source. He elaborates in detail on Jesus's crafting of a single bird. The other children are not impressed and they mock him, until he gives it flight and their attitude changes: 'What a wizard! He made the earthen bird fly by blowing on it!' With a New Testament joke, Fo has a child named Thomas doubt his miracle and ask for verification (p. 101). Jesus gets all the children in on the act, and Fo seems to delight in describing the children at play with him. Each child crafts his own fanciful creature and brings it to Jesus to blow on it and give it life. Fo takes the opportunity to inform the action with grotesque and carnivalesque imagery, and by relating the images to types of food he adds a touch of the Rabelaisian:

> Then another kid makes a sausage, a salami-snake, with twelve wings in flight, no tail, twelve legs. . . . Then another made a mush, a sort of cake, with a head right in the middle, no neck, beak up, and all the wings unpaired, all around. And no legs. (p. 103–5)

In the original proto-gospels, after the twelve birds fly away, a child comes along and ruins Jesus's pools with a willow branch. Jesus reacts angrily,

> 'You insolent, godless dunderhead, what harm did the pools and the water do to you? See, now you also shall wither like a tree and shall bear neither leaves nor root nor fruit.' And immediately that lad withered up completely; and Jesus departed and went into Joseph's house.[21]

Solidarity with the Poor

Fo takes the idea of a spoiler character, but uses him to set up a parable on hegemony and class struggle. The children's play is interrupted by a richly dressed, well-groomed, shifty eyed child on horseback, accompanied by an entourage of mounted soldiers. It is the son of the nobleman who rules the city. He wants to be included in the miraculous play, but the other children attempt to keep him away,

> Because every time we ask to play with you,
> young master, to ride your horses, you say no!
> Because every time we come to your house,
> because you have fantastic games, you have the guards shoo us away. (p. 107)

Now that Jesus is in solidarity with the poorer children, Fo weaves in the aforementioned theme of the importance of Jesus to the folk: 'You may be rich but we have the Palestine. The Palestine is ours' (p. 107).

The master's son decides that if he cannot play then no one can, and he proceeds to trample all the earthen figurines with his horse. The soldiers clear the piazza, proclaiming: 'He can do whatever he wants, because he is the master's son' (p. 109). Jesus calls for his father to strike down, or at least maim, the evil child. The exchange between God and Jesus is presented in familial terms – as a father trying to understand and reason with his hysterical child. Although God refuses to harm the master's son, he gives Jesus permission to do it himself, with a joke on the unity of Father and Son: 'But don't go around telling everyone I did it' (p. 113). Lightning flashes from Jesus's eyes and he fulminates the privileged child, turning him to clay (terracotta, to be exact). The soldiers flee, terrified.

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Dario Fo rehearsing with Mario Pirovano in front of the backdrop for Fo's *Francis the Holy Jester*.

Mary runs to the scene and orders Jesus to resurrect the clay child at once. This is reminiscent of *I-G Thomas*, where more than once Joseph and Mary plead with Jesus to resurrect or heal the people he has stricken. After various attempts to defy his mother's orders (which include claiming that he has not yet learned how to resurrect), Jesus finally consents. This is the climax of Fo's socio-political message, as Jesus resuscitates the boy with a kick to his behind, reminiscent of the kick Christ gives the pope in 'Boniface VIII' in *Mistero Buffo*. As the boy stands there stunned and afraid, holding his buttocks, Fo's Jesus expounds on the kick as a metaphor for the coming revolution:

> You feel your ass burning from the kick I gave you? Listen up, it's an allegory – a great lesson for those who are afraid, hiding behind their windows. (*He points all around the piazza.*) If they begin to think and reason, take care because you will become great from the force of the kicks you will receive! Your ass will grow and grow and grow: PUUUM! And it will explode! Assless *in aeternum*! Amen! (p. 117)

The Magdalene

As stated above, the discoveries of early Christian apocrypha changed the historical picture of the early centuries of Christianity. The biggest find was at Nag Hammadi in Upper Egypt in 1945, where local inhabitants dug up a large earthenware jar containing about a dozen papyrus books. These early Christian writings in the Egyptian Coptic language, dating from 350–400 CE, were translations of earlier texts in Greek, some of which can be dated to 120–150 CE.[22] Many apocryphal scriptures were part of the Christian movement know as Gnosticism.

'No form of lost Christianity has so intrigued modern readers and befuddled modern scholars.'[23] For various reasons Gnosticism is difficult to study and to define. First, because it was eventually suppressed by the

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Roman Church, most of what comes down to us about it was written by people who intended to discredit it. Second, it seems that the movement itself was not uniform, and in fact some Gnostics were not Christian.

Gnosticism derives from *gnosis*, the ancient Greek word for intimate knowledge. Descending in part from forms of Platonism, the Gnostics believed that human souls are trapped in this imperfect material world, and require certain mystical knowledge in order to liberate themselves and return to their source in a spiritual realm. 'Those who receive, and understand, and accept these teachings will then be "Gnostics", those "in the know".'[24] Christianized Gnostics thus believed that Christ was the one sent to impart this knowledge, which is essential to spiritual salvation.

Gnostics were inclined to interpret scripture not as literal readings but as allegorical insights to mystical understanding. Thus, for example, they tended to interpret the virgin birth and the resurrection as symbolic rather than literal. Though Gnostic writing varies to a great extent, much of it is intriguingly esoteric, cryptic, and mystical.

An interesting aspect of the Gnostic gospels is that they present a different Jesus than do the orthodox scriptures. One of the most striking of these differences is Jesus's relation to Mary of Magdala or Mary Magdalene. More than one apocryphon suggests that Mary held a special place among the disciples, and in the Gospel of Philip[25] there are passages that suggest intimacy between Christ and Mary Magdalene: 'There were those who always walked with the Lord: Mary, his mother and her sister and Magdalene, whom they call his lover.'[26]

> And the consort of Christ is Mary Magdalene. The [Lord loved Mary] more than all the disciples, and he kissed her on the [mouth many times]. The other [women/disciples saw] him. They said to him, 'Why do you [love her] more than all of us?' The Saviour answered and said to them, 'Why do I not love you as I do her?'[27]

In the Gospel of Mary, the Magdalene is presented not only as an apostle, but as the favoured one, for the resurrected Christ reveals to her the nature of things that were not revealed to the others. At the end the apostle Levi acknowledges to the others that 'Jesus loved her more than us.'[28]

Dario Fo contextualizes the apocryphal personage of Mary Magdalene in one of the most ingenious and endearing episodes from *Johan Padan Discovers America*, first performed in 1992. This play has a special place in Fo's oeuvre because it is the only *giullarata* that consists of one long narrative, running about two and a half hours. It tells the story of Johan Padan,[29] a northern Italian *picaro* who escapes the Inquisition by stowing away with Columbus to the New World. There he is captured by a tribe of cannibals. After a series of fantastical adventures, he becomes the spiritual leader of a huge number of Native Americans. When they are about to confront the Spanish conquerors, he decides they must be Christianized, thinking that then the Spanish would not mistreat or enslave them.

'They Must Have Torn out the Pages!'

Ironically the godless rogue Johan has no choice but to instruct the *Indios* himself. His attempts at trying to contextualize Christianity into their very different culture are noteworthy. For example, since there are no apples in the area, the forbidden fruit becomes a mango, which presents a challenge for the snake. The natives, who hardly wear any clothes and live in a natural state, must conclude that they were never expelled from Eden in the first place. And when they hear about the sword-wielding angel who expels Adam and Eve – 'Surely he was one of those Spanish bastards!'[30]

Fo also takes the opportunity to have the natives show repulsion towards the paternalistic God the Father and sympathy for his Son. When Johan tells them of the crucifixion, they tear their hair in desperation, crying: 'Cruel and evil god! . . . Why is it that when your son cried, "Father help me!" you stayed there playing the guitar with the angels? You let him croak all by himself, like a dog' (p. 91). In presenting Christ with his apostles, Johan explains:

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The only thing they didn't like was this going around praying with the twelve apostles, all men. They were a little suspicious, so I added the Magdalene. 'He had a woman named Magdalene.' They loved this image of a beautiful woman covered only by her long hair.

He mimes Magdalene flashing her breasts from under her hair.

NATIVES: They must have always been in their hammock making love!

JOHAN: No. The Gospel doesn't mention it.

NATIVES: Then what were they doing in the hammock, catching a breeze? They were making love! How can a woman like the Magdalene not make love with Jesus, and he, the Son of God, not make love to her? He did make love, by God! Like a god!

Audience applauds.

JOHAN: Then why doesn't the Gospel say so?

NATIVES: They must have torn out the pages![31]

Presenting Magdalene as Jesus's lover supports one of Fo's major themes in the play – that sex is quite natural, not evil. This theme is presented at various times, at the beginning with Johan and his girlfriend in Venice, and later in America with the beautiful, uninhibited native women.

In the same manner in which Fo uses the natives' sensibility to support his Christian dichotomy of God the Father and Jesus Christ, so he has Johan render the official gospels more immediate to them by presenting Jesus as having a lover. This apocryphal element presents Jesus with human needs and desires. Not long after *Johan Padan*, Fo, his wife Franca Rame, and their son Jacopo co-wrote *Sex? Don't Mind If I Do*, performed as a monologue by Rame in 1994. This candid 'chat' about a commonsense approach to sex is based on the book *Zen and the Art of Making Love* by Jacopo Fo.

The natives' assumption, 'They must have torn out the pages!' is Fo's commentary on orthodox scriptures: the Church authorities decided which writings suited their sense of purpose and successfully suppressed those that did not fit their agenda. The selective use of apocryphal gospels is an important part of his strategy: he simultaneously attacks the hegemonic power of the Church and upholds the right of the folk to create for



Another moment from Fo's performance in *Johan Padan Discovers America*.

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themselves a religion that meets their needs.

In the limited examples presented in this study, we have seen several functions of the apocryphal gospels. Dario Fo takes these up while giving them his personal touch. He fills in the gap in Jesus's childhood left in the New Testament, by associating the holy family with poor migrant workers of his day and by having the child Jesus warn those in power of the coming revolution. He picks up on the presentation of a more human Jesus, and underscores his leitmotif of Jesus being closer to the hearts of the folk while presenting his commonsense attitude towards sex. But perhaps most important, the apocrypha seem to fulfil the need to tell stories about the life and teachings of Jesus, and by fitting the apocrypha into his own storytelling Fo continues the tradition.

Notes and References

1. See Dario Fo, *L'Operaio conosce 300 parole il padrone 1000 per questo lui è il padrone*, in *Le commedie di Dario Fo*, 12 vols to date (Turin: Einaudi, 1966–98), vol. 3, p. 107.

2. Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, ed. Valentino Gerratana, 4 vols (Turin: Einaudi, 1975), Q 27, par. 1. Passages from *Quaderni del carcere* (*Prison Notebooks*) are conventionally designated by the notebook number (Q for *quaderno*) followed by the paragraph number.

3. Dario Fo, *Mistero buffo*, in *Le commedie di Dario Fo*, vol. 5, p. 28–9. All translations from Fo's works are by the author. For more on Fo's contrast between God the Father and Jesus, see Antonio Scuderi, *Dario Fo and Popular Performance* (Ottawa: Legas, 1998), p. 68–73.

4. Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*: *Books that Did Not Make It into the New Testament* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 4.

5. Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1979), p. 6.

6. Bart D. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities: the Battle for Scripture and the Faiths We Never Knew* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 245–6.

7. Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*, p. 2.

8. Dario Fo, *Storia della tigre e altre storie*, ed. Franca Rame and Arturo Corso (Milan: La Comune, 1980), p. 63.

9. Fo claims that his source is the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew (p. 63). This is a Latin version, written about 600 CE, which brings together the stories of the two earlier proto-gospels. For more on the Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew and how it varies from the original proto-gospels, see Bart D. Ehrman and Zlatko Plese, ed. and trans, *The Apocryphal Gospels: Texts and Translations* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 73–7.

10. Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*, p. 63.

11. Ron Cameron, *Other Gospels: Non-Canonical Gospel Texts* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982), p. 122–3.

12. Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*, p. 57.

13. Cameron, *Other Gospels*, p. 123.

14. Ibid., p. 123.

15. Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*, p. 57.

16. The text of 'First Miracle' is on facing pages, with Fo's dialect-based performance language on the left and standard Italian on the right. For more on Fo's performance language. see Antonio Scuderi, 'Updating Antiquity', in *Dario Fo: Stage, Text and Tradition*, ed. Joseph Farrell and Antonio Scuderi (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), p. 54–8.

17. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984). For more on Dario Fo and folk laughter, see Scuderi, *Popular Performance*, p. 79–108, and for more on Fo's carnival frame, see Scuderi, *Dario Fo: Framing, Festival, and the Folkloric Imagination* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2011), p. 75–95.

18. Dario Fo, 'Strage degli innocenti', in *Mistero Buffo*, p. 31–40.

19. This northern Italian expression conveys a sentiment similar to 'Oh God!'

20. Cameron, *Other Gospels*, p. 125.

21. Ibid., p. 125.

22. Pagels, *Gnostic Gospels*, p. xiii–xvi.

23. Ehrman, *Lost Christianities*, p. 113.

24. Ibid., p. 115.

25. Scholars estimate that this gospel was written during the third century and draws from earlier works. See Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*, p. 38.

26. Ibid., p. 41.

27. Ibid., p. 42. The brackets are in the original and indicate missing or unclear words that had to be filled in by translators.

28. Ehrman, *Lost Scriptures*, p. 35. There are two Greek fragments of the Gospel of Mary from the third century and a fuller though not complete Coptic manuscript from the fifth century.

29. In Fo's dialect the 'j' in Johan is pronounced like the French *Jacque* rather than the German *Johan*. Padan refers to the area of the Po valley (*la pianura padana*) in northern Italy.

30. Dario Fo, *Johan Padan a la descoverta de le Americhe*, ed. Franca Rame (Firenze: Giunti Gruppo Editoriale, 1992), p. 87.

31. Fo's *giullarate* are improvised on a skeletal script. This is especially so in *Johan Padan*, whose text was originally a series of paintings and drawings. The excerpt here is from a taped performance in Pordenone on 12 December 1991. See Dario Fo, *Johan Padan a la descoverta de le Americhe*, video cassette (Milan: C.T.F.R., 1992).

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