

ARTISTIC INTERDISCIPLINARITY AND LA FURA DELS BAUS

1979 – 1989

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ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to explore questions of artistic interdisciplinarity through a study of the Catalan theatre company La Fura dels Baus's practice in the period from 1979 to 1989. This study sees artistic interdisciplinarity and La Fura as prominent aspects of contemporary theatre, which have received little critical attention in theatre studies.

The general introduction attempts to define a conceptual and contextual framework for this thesis. Chapter 1 examines 'artistic interdisciplinarity' as a significant conceptual instrument for this study. Chapter 2 investigates some instances of artistically interdisciplinary practice before and after performance art.

Chapter 3 takes a general look at what constitutes the wider social and aesthetic context within which La Fura had its inception. Chapter 4 focuses on the group's early productions in Catalonia from 1979 to 1983, a period often neglected by scholars writing on the company's work.

Chapter 5 presents *Accions* (1983-87), *Suz/o/Suz* (1985-91) and *Tier Mon* (1988-90). These three productions comprise the features of the *lenguaje furero*. Chapter 6, 7 and 8 examine these features, La Fura's manipulation of scenic threads such as space, time, sound, image, body and movement as well as the interdisciplinary exchanges with different arts. Chapter 8 also looks at the relations among La Fura's productions and questions of national and aesthetic identities in Catalonia and Spain.

The final unit presents the conclusions of this thesis. Through a cross-disciplinary methodology, this thesis has the double ambition of stimulating further debates and actions in re-mapping theatrical language as well as connecting ideas about both main objects of study to an understanding of the art of theatre and its environments at the end of the twentieth century.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	ii
ABSTRACT	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
GENERAL INTRODUCTION	1
Our Theatrical Times	2
Theatrical Language	17
Artistic Interdisciplinarity	27
La Fura dels Baus	34
The Method of Approach	48
1. ARTISTIC INTERDISCIPLINARITY	
Introduction	54
1.1. Contemporaneous Interdisciplinarity	54
1.2. Interdisciplinary Intensities	69
1.3. Afterwords	81
2. ARTISTIC INTERDISCIPLINARY INSTANCES	
Introduction	83
2.1. The <i>Natya-Sastra</i>	84
2.2. Modernist and Postmodernist Arts	95
2.3. Afterwords	110
3. THE CATALAN/CASTILIAN AXIS AND <i>EL TEATRO INDEPENDIENTE</i>	
Introduction	115
3.1. The Catalonia/Spain Axis	122
3.2. The Catalan TI and the Performance Theatre of Els Joglars and Els Comediants	132
3.3. Afterwords: Post-Francoism and the Democratic Transition	151
4. LA FURA'S PRE-HISTORY	
Introduction	158
4.1. Inception, Early Productions and <i>el Desencanto</i>	159
4.2. The 1980s Expansion, <i>Reanimació</i> and <i>la Movida</i>	172
4.3. Afterwords	194
5. THE FIRST TRILOGY	
Introduction	198
5.1. Productions	198
5.2. La Fura's Performance Texts	219
5.3. Afterwords	228
6. LA FURA'S FIRST TRILOGY AND PERFORMANCE ART	
Introduction	230
6.1. The Acting and Performing Boundaries	231
6.2. Imagetic Embodiment	235
6.3. La Fura's Artistic Interdisciplinary Exchanges with Performance Art	242
6.4. Afterwords	248
7. THE SPACE/TIME AXES OF LA FURA	
Introduction	250
7.1. Other Theatres and the Space/Time Axes	250
7.2. Sound and the Space/Time Axis: La Fura's Music and Theatre Interdisciplinarity	260
7.3. Afterwords	269
8. MOVING THEATRE	
Introduction	271

8.1. Moving Audiences	272
8.2. La Fura's Relational Feature and Violence	276
8.3. Moving Identities	286
8.4. Afterwords: La Fura's Dances	296
CONCLUSIONS	300
BIBLIOGRAPHY	310
Artistic Interdisciplinarity and the Performing Arts	310
Cultural and Critical Theory	319
La Fura dels Baus	325
Nationalism, Statehood and Regionalism	326
Theatre History – Catalonia and Spain	328
APPENDIX 1: Chronology of works	331

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Despite our desperate eternal attempt to separate,
contain, and mend, categories always leak.

Thi Min-Ha Trinh (1989, 94)

Labels are useful for medicines.

Renato Russo (1985)¹

These statements by scholar Thi Min-Ha Trinh and rock star Renato Russo are not unique in revealing a critical self-awareness about the contradictory and contingent limits of taxonomies. In his introduction to *The Order of Things* (1966), Michel Foucault calls our attention to the idea that classifications, representations, and definitions are open to critique and rectification. Trinh, Russo and Foucault are some of the artists and critics who delineate the challenging terrain within which this study is situated.

This thesis seeks to examine artistic interdisciplinarity and La Fura dels Baus² theatre. The period under analysis goes from the inception of the Barcelona based group in 1979 to 1989. 1989 marks the end of both La Fura's first trilogy and the nine man composition which devised, directed and performed *Accions* (1983-87), *Suz/o/Suz* (1985-91) and *Tier Mon* (1988-90). These three productions also comprised the constitutive features of a theatrical language developed by the company, the *lenguaje furero*, a term used both by the group and Spanish critics. This introduction explains the reasons for the selection of this period, while presenting the subjects, intentions and methodology involved in this research.

'Our Theatrical Times', the first section of this introduction, starts by adumbrating the contemporaneity within which the theatrical works under analysis are

¹ The Brazilian singer and musician told me in a personal conversation that 'rótulo é bom prá [sic] remédio.'

² 'Fura' means ferret in Catalan. 'Baus' was a torrent or a dumping waste in Moià, Catalonia, where three of the co-founders and scenic creators (*fureros*) met and lived before moving to Barcelona, in 1978-79.

situated. Within the aesthetic and conceptual diversity which an examination of contemporary theatre may bring out, the section presents what I understand by the term 'theatre'. Drawing on debates in different disciplines around postmodernism, supermodernity, arts, theatricality, performance art and performance, I argue that theatre should not be disconnected from a critical understanding of it as an artistic language. 'Theatrical Languages', the second section of this introduction, considers theatre as an open and flexible interdiscipline, an ever-changing terrain where plural ideas, desires, dreams and positionalities are materialised.

Both first and second sections open a wide fan of issues related to contemporary theatre performances at the end of the twentieth century. Within this interconnected contextual and conceptual web, this study selects two main objects; artistic interdisciplinarity and La Fura's theatre. Both objects are presented briefly in the following sections of this introduction. Both artistic interdisciplinarity and La Fura itself comprise the focus and a means for this study to investigate contemporary theatre during the two last decades of the twentieth century.

Artistic interdisciplinarity in La Fura's theatre has so far received little attention in theatre studies. My purpose in rectifying this oversight is to examine aspects of theatre which seem to indicate a continuous transformation of this artistic language. The methodology applied in this enterprise is presented in the final section of this introduction, which is titled 'The Method of Approach'. This introduction aims to set the scene for the investigation of artistic interdisciplinarity in La Fura dels Baus' theatre from 1979 to 1989.

Our Theatrical Times

To start a systematised study on contemporary theatre nowadays involves facing conceptual crossroads and a series of methodological problems. Such an enterprise has

to deal not only with a plethora of multiple readings about the diversity of this ancient art, but also with the planetary net of interdependent factors and contingencies around each work of theatre at the end of the twentieth century.

This interconnected net includes a crisis of certainties which may also be termed a crisis of definition. According to Marc Augé, this is a crisis of social meaning, 'that makes it more difficult to conceive and manage our relation to the other' (1999, ix). Augé states that we may intuitively sense that 'the development and expansion of liberal capitalism, nationalism, particularism, fundamentalism are contemporaneous in the full sense of the word: they belong to the same time and space and they are connected to one another – they hang together' (1999, xi). He seems to highlight James Clifford's remark that, within this crisis and interconnected web, social sciences and cultural studies 'ground things, now, on a moving earth' (1986, 22).

The conceptual mappings and revisions or epistemological (in)decisions of our age have been attempted within a high degree of evasion and pluralism. Authoritative, exhaustive and/or definitive epistemologies are mistrusted within the reflexivity needed to approach this part of history that we are living through. The acceptance and the imposition of white, male, heterosexual and logocentrism have been defiantly questioned by other discourses.

Binary structures still persist with their firm roots and rhizomas centred on prejudices, opposite interests and unresolved personal questions. Nevertheless, this is also a time of changes in an apparently unmatched way. For Michio Kaku the unevenly distributed future is present in the 1990s when 'more scientific knowledge has been created than in all of human history. Computer power is doubling every 18 months. The Net is doubling every year. The number of DNA sequences we can analyse is doubling

every two years.’³ These are aspects of a contemporaneity which Augé names as ‘supermodernity’:

far from reversing or even bending the course of cumulative modernity as it was conceived in the nineteenth century, supermodernity prolongs it. But the effects of unprecedented acceleration brought on by scientific and technological research overdetermine its meaning and make it increasingly difficult to understand. An excess of information gives us the feeling that history is speeding up at the very moment that an excess of images and the swiftness of communication make us feel the planet’s smallness. Meanwhile, the cosmologies, institutions, and organizations that constitute mediations between people, between individual existence and social life, seem to have been outstripped, and each of us is more or less left to our respective solitudes. The movement of planetarization and individualization is not making itself felt everywhere with equal force, but it is a general condition, and it is creating singular, particular resistance of various forms around the earth. [...] The paradox of our day is such that, just as all uniformization calls forth difference, so every sensed lack of meaning harbors meaning and demands to be made meaningful. It is in this complex play of appeals and responses that the anthropologist may find new objects to reflect upon (1999, x-xi).

‘Postmodernist studies’ have been facing, revising and shaping similar issues. Supermodernity, however, detours from debates that are provoked by the prefix ‘post’ indicating a trespassing of modernity.⁴ At the same time, supermodernity indicates changes prolonging and accelerating modernity; and these changes have to be negotiated within the simultaneous universalisation and particularisation that drive and instigate different fields of knowledge at the border of a new millennium.

It is not an objective of this research to elaborate further the debates concerning the end or not of modernity, the conceptual misleading or the terms ‘postmodernism’ and ‘supermodernity’ to design our times nor the gap between modernist and postmodernist arts. These issues, nonetheless, permeate discussions around the arts at the end the twentieth century, even though the plateau may remain confusing and evasive. According to Herbert Blau,

³ Michio Kaku, ‘My Life with Molly’, *Sunday Times*, 15 March 1998, pp.1-2, 1.

⁴ The idea of the existence of a ‘post-modernism’ seems to have been questioned since its inception. Jean Baudrillard has highlighted the conceptual contradictions of postmodernism. In a published interview with Mike Gane, Baudrillard interprets ‘postmodernism’ as an empty term that had been elected to designate the impossibility of defining ‘what’s going on now, [when] grand theories are over and done with, as Lyotard says. [...] So in a sense there is no such thing as postmodernism’ (1993, 22).

the datum would seem to be that no idea can be stable for very long, without contradiction, no less ideologically certified with an extended life expectancy. What remains to be done is still the major issue, but it hardly takes a commitment to modernist obscurantism to believe that Freud was as close as we're likely to come to the truth of thought when he said we must learn to live in uncertainty and doubt (1992, 14).

Ideological uncertainty and critical doubts have not blocked debates about our realities at the end of the twentieth century. These debates seem useful tools in approaching the temporal context of the two last decades of the century as a way of grounding this research.

This questioning demarcates postmodernism's constitutive paradoxical elements that defy the maintenance of conceptual and epistemological certainties. Hal Foster reassures that the concept of postmodernism in its indiscriminate use within art criticism, 'was and still is a conflicted one. Its rupture with modernism is dubious, and yet clearly many modernist paradigms have eroded' (1984, 201). For Brian Wallis, 'any understanding of contemporary art and criticism is necessarily bound up with a consideration of modernism, for modernism is the cultural standard which even today governs our conception of what art is.' (1984, xii).

For Mariza Veloso and Angelica Madeira (1999), modernity, as a historical condition for the culture of the Occident, was constituted in the bulge of a complex process that emerges in Europe at the end of the fifteenth century, being accentuated in the eighteenth century and accelerated from the nineteenth century to our time. Drawing on Marx and Weber, Veloso and Madeira point out that this process is basically constituted by the generalisation of the capitalist production system and the predominance of instrumental rationality (1999, 31). Free from the traditional religious domination, the arts, sciences and morality became autonomous areas within which the normative codes and legitimating strategies of their own discourses are ordered (1999, 32).

'Postmodernism' seems to remain as a desire of new times, the ironic nostalgia of a recent but non-existent future when we could have trespassed an 'old' modernity. Nevertheless, the term postmodernism is undoubtedly the one most used to gather the transformations that have been occurring within the cultural production of late capitalism and its new logic, as posited by Fredric Jameson (1991).

'Late capitalism', 'globalisation', 'second modernity' are other terms that name our times. This coexistence of traditional, modern and postmodern values as well as numerous contradictory tendencies, has reached an intricate actuality. Therefore, the different attempts to approach this actuality cannot escape from a permanent and necessary critique. The failure of the totalising aims of such attempts is provoked by the distinct manifestations of contemporary phenomena in different cultures and sites. This distinctiveness triggers plural reactions to the same phenomena. The coexistence of difference, contradiction and variable contingencies demands the necessary exploration of any issue from complementary perspectives.

Postmodernism and/or supermodernity approach these and other aspects of our contemporaneity. These include the mass media's monopoly over the reality and the orientation of behaviours, globalisation, multiculturalism, postindustrialisation, the transformation of capitalism, the demise of nation-states, micropolitics, performativity, new technological achievements which are still unevenly distributed, consumerism as a primary social parameter and value, hyperreality, virtual reality, simulacra and postcolonialism, within an erosion of certainties, canons, boundaries and essentialisms.⁵

Augé (1995, 1999) points out other factors that give an impulse to the necessary conceptual revisions in different areas of knowledge within supermodernity. He mentions the apparent acceleration of history and shrinking of the planet, changing

⁵ On the twentieth century-predicament see also Clifford and Marcus (1986) and Clifford (1988). On postmodernism see Jameson (1996). On supermodernity see Augé (1995, 1999). Graham and Labanyi (1995) provide an introduction to postmodernist culture in Spain. Fernández (1997) examines postmodernist culture in Catalonia.

parameters of time and space as well as the crisis of otherness, instantaneity of information and image dissemination, and disenchantment. He also states that although these factors 'intervene in the definition of contemporaneity as modern or postmodern, they must be understood as only a symptom of that contemporaneity, not a global explanation of it' (1999, 33).

He proposes an anthropology connected to an acknowledgement of contemporaneous *worlds*. This connection and acknowledgement aim to be able 'to select, analyze, and understand the new modes of sociality and the new spaces in which, not without calamities and contradictions, these utterly new recompositions, a major aspect of our contemporaneity, manifest themselves' (1999, x). These responsibilities attached to specific tendencies in social sciences and methodologies of criticism confronted with the contemporaneity that I am attempting to delineate, may obviously be considered as sharing similar characteristics, aims and concerns with some currents of the contemporaneous arts.

The arts are concepts permanently changing and illustrate much of the context referred to by the cultural theorists mentioned so far. Amongst the artistic materialisations of discussions of the human being and her/his environments, theatre representations and presentations are live constructions which display the existence centred on the simultaneous presence of its players and spectators. Within the complex game and play of appeals and appearances that configure our contemporaneous worlds, theatre as a performative art provides other possibilities for reading human behaviour.

Theatre may double, distort, recreate, imitate or ignore its contemporaneity. Theatre aesthetic and artists are never immune to their sites. Theatre's inseparable forms and contents negotiate with, shape and are shaped by this mutual nutrition with everyday life. By 'theatre', I mean not simply the text or an author that will be staged in a proscenium arch theatre, directed by someone who follows a playwright's script and

blocks actors delivering that rehearsed text. This restrictive concept of theatre seems to ground Tom Waits' comment quoted by Ariel Goldenberg, describing theatre as an invalid who needs kicks 'to make it walk' (in Delgado and Heritage 1996, 303). During a conference on the Performative, Performance and Society at the University of Brasilia in November 1995, Xico Chaves, a Brazilian performance artist, stated that theatre was dead. Even a fighter for a more flexible and deeper understanding of contemporaneous theatres such as Richard Schechner, may be encountered situating 'theatre' as an art form that crystallised itself in a similar fashion as opera and classical ballet at the end of the twentieth century (1997, 154).

These are gross generalisations but it is not possible to ignore views of this art as anachronistic within post-industrial societies (Marranca 1984, Cohen 1989, Birringer 1996). The anachronism attached to 'theatre' implies another erroneous idea that this art stopped evolving aesthetically at the beginning of the twentieth century. As posited by Johannes Birringer, 'contemporary criticism and theory of performance, in other words, often appear to cling to an aesthetic understanding of theatricality still based on the level of dramatic and cinematic illusion, acting techniques, narratives, and the representational mechanisms structured around language' (1996, 38).

The existence of an equally increasing marginalisation or fragility of theatre within the predominance of the mass media has also been approached by different artists and critics (Auslander 1996, 1997; Schechner 1997; Sánchez 1999). The mass media dominates both the markets and the orientation of behaviour. Nevertheless, these factors have not barred many theatre works, artists and groups from achieving critical, artistic and public acclaim or visibility. The menace of being marginalised has also been seen as a specific feature to be faced and incorporated by artistic live performances, which might offer a sought alternative to the dominating mainstream values in our media age (Lischka 1992; Phelan 1993).

All these cultural theorists celebrate a huge diversity of theatre manifestations within and outside the ever-changing theatrical margins of an artistic performance announced and performed as such. All acknowledge the impossibility of encompassing such a variety under labels or categorisations which cannot avoid quick dissipation (States 1985; Huxley and Witts 1996; Carlson 1996). This variety and the consequent various critical writings on this same diversity in the 1980s and 1990s are fuelled by evasion from disciplinary categories and restraining conventions. Theatre at the end of the century may be understood as 'performance' by some critics (Cohen 1989; Lischka 1992; Birringer 1996; Auslander 1997) and 'postmodern theatre' or 'performance' by others (Elinor Fuchs 1983; Kaye 1994; E. R. George 1996). These theatrical understandings coexist with those which attach their studies to the proscenium-arch staging of written texts and conventional narrative methods. Some may even use 'performance' to describe this understanding of theatre (Hilton 1987) or not (Oliva 1989, 1992).

Many of these critics have been using 'performance' as the concept and methodology of criticism to avoid prejudices or aesthetic discrepancy in relation to the theatrical art and its continuous, disturbed, non-linear, ever-changing transformation. 'Performance' has been potentialising different approaches in theatre and arts as well as in linguistics, social sciences and psychology. For Sue Jennings, performance 'enters all domains of human existence in both secular and religious fields; the "dramas of everyday life" as well as the "dramas set apart", i.e. theatre and ritual' (1995, 9). The 'dramas set apart' cited by Jennings may include many other examples.⁶

Claire MacDonald situates a tension 'between performance as an inevitable manifestation of consumer culture and as a (perhaps utopian) vision of how culture and identity might be redefined, rethought and reconsidered' (1996, vii). Erika Fischer-

⁶ See Schechner (1973, 3) or his Performance Event-Time-Space Chart (1990, 20-1). Michael Kirby's Introduction (1987) or Blau (1990) provide other examples of theatrical and non-theatrical performances.

Lichte has indicated that ‘culture, according to nineteenth-century common belief, was manifested by and resulted in artefacts which could be preserved and handed down to the next generation’ (1997, 24). Such beliefs and strategy or methodology of study have been with us since the Renaissance.⁷ In spite of the fact that European culture could be described as a predominantly performative culture from the Middle Ages to the end of the eighteenth century, the notion of culture based on material approaches was a significant and determinant influence over ‘the development not only of the humanities, but also of other cultural domains’ (Fischer-Lichte 1997, 24).

Some of the characteristics of theatre and performance such as transitoriness, ephemerality, liveness and temporality are going to be in frontal clash with such a material view. Nevertheless, different studies on diverse areas have been questioning this materialist notion of culture through the investigation of personal, social, cultural and linguistic performances to support the study of culture and the development of the humanities.

The conceptual multiplicity and reach of the word ‘performance’ blur frontiers between art and everyday life. Blau seems to miss a time ‘in a simpler world than this, when if you thought about performance you’re thinking about the theatre’ (1992, 2). He also recalls that ‘performance itself became a heuristic principle in other disciplines, and a methodology of critique’ (Blau 1992b, 21). For Elin Diamond, ‘since the 1960s performance has floated free of theatre precincts to describe an enormous range of cultural activity [...] as a convenient concept for postmodernism’ (1996, 2-3). However, while Deb Magollin affirms that ‘performance is a theatre of inclusion – anyone can do it!’ (1997, 69), Michael Kirby argues that ‘all theatre is performance, but all performance is not theatre’ (1987, xi). Within this current debate about the opposition or

⁷ See Jardine (1996).

not between performance and theatre, mainly in North-American academy, a distinction seems necessary.⁸

An artistic, musical or theatrical performance differs from everyday life through a conscious, liminal, opted, public, aware and declared exhibition within an aesthetic frame. Social and cultural performances may have similar characteristics and aesthetic concerns but not always declared or divulged. Performance and theatre practices deal with blurred limits in the dialectical exchange between theatre and performance, arts and everyday life. This exchange predates debates outside artistic domains which study the “restored behavior” or “twice behaved behavior” (behavior that can be repeated, that is, rehearsed)’ as Schechner summarised ‘performance’ (1990, 43). His summary indicates again the extension of the possible reach of ‘performance’.

The character Andre, played by Andre Gregory in the film *My Dinner with Andre* (directed by Louis Malle in 1981), pointed out that Jerzy Grotowski had given up doing theatre because everybody was always performing, making theatrical performances quite superfluous. While Schechner stated that ‘everything in human behavior indicates we perform our existence, especially our social existence’ (1982, 14), Stephen Connor added that ‘it has become difficult for us to be sure where action ends and performance begins’ (1996, 108).

Mike Featherstone underlines this ambiguous tension when he states that ‘behind the emphasis upon performance, it can be argued, lies a deeper interest in manipulating the feelings of others’ (1991, 190). He states that within this tension which coincides approximately ‘with the culture of narcissism, the new conception of self which has emerged, [...] the “performing self” places greater emphasis upon appearance, display and the management of impression’ (1991, 187). He quotes Warren Susman’s remark

⁸ On this debate see also Wilshire (1990); Schechner (1992, 1995 and 1997); Jill Dolan (1993, 1996); Worthen (1995); Diamond (1996); E. R. George (1996), and Auslander (1997).

that 'the social role demanded of all in the new culture of personality was that of performer. Every American was to become a performing self' (1991, 188).

An accentuation of the protagonism of simulation in supermodernity and/or the presence of play, theatricality, and spectacularisation in the postmodern condition question the limits, needs, problems and results of theatrical representation.⁹ Baudrillard has consistently exposed the fact that the simulacra and simulations of our hyperreal contemporaneity blur the distinctions between the real, the symbolic and the imaginary, increased by new technological and mass media improvements.¹⁰ The arts have been operating within/about this panorama.

Drawing on Baudrillard, Valentina Valentini describes simulation in her *Després del Teatre Modern* (1991) as

the encoder mechanism that dominates the actual aesthetic experience, the set of arts and the culture which shapes both daily life and the artistic sphere; this is the course into which the abstracting procedure arrived in its encounter with the different artistic tendencies of the new vanguards (1991, 22).¹¹

The arts have been raiding isolations between life subjects and artistic objects, reflecting and shaping a surrounding environment and their changes of behaviours, values and ways of thinking. The sprawling use of performance as a concept, methodology or even a way of life seems to proceed within the postmodernist condition; it may be disturbing, or not, to theatre studies. Marranca protests that

yet, more than any art form, theatre is most implicated in everyday life because of this culture's infatuation with performance as a mean of personal awareness and expression, as life style. Now that the theatrical is recognized as a way of being in the world, how will theatre think of itself? (1984, 133).

⁹ See Wilshire (1990) or Blau (1990).

¹⁰ See Gane (1993) and Baudrillard (1994).

¹¹ 'Simulació es el dispositiu codificador que domina l'experiència estètica actual, el conjunt de l'art i de la cultura que conforma tant la vida quotidiana com l'esfera artística, és el recorregut al qual ha arribat el procediment d'abstracció en el seu encontre amb les instàncies expressades per les diverses tendències de l'art de les noves avantguardes.'

Theatre continues rethinking itself. Taking account of the theatrical presence in everyday life, theatre, as a usual site of performances, answers back using this 'new' context. The history of world theatre exhibits various indications of the fact that this is not a new challenge. Theatre has been theatricalising everyday theatricality; if the world and its inhabitants perform, these performances of the world will continue being some of the ultimate meanings of theatre. The original action about these other performances are some of the same challenges of theatre in its creative doubling, re-thinking or impossible representation of the human experience or in its attempts to create an object to be shared with different beholders.

Theatrical criticism and performance studies display cautious behaviour to avoid conceiving repressive definitions that do not respect the diversity and the characteristics of the arts in escaping categorisations. The arts provoke and reach other orderings. 'Performance' seems to be an umbrella concept suitable to encompass a free and disordering plurality of artistic and theatrical forms, without excluding non-artistic or undeclared performances. It reminds us of features that within the arts should not be isolated exclusively in postmodernist times but that were clearly increased and re-evidenced through performance art after the Second World War.

Paul Schimmel states that

after World War II, the Holocaust, and the atomic bomb, a change of consciousness occurred in the world at large. The possibility of global annihilation made human beings more aware than ever before of the fragility of creation, subject as it was to forces of destruction of unprecedented magnitude. In this regard, it also made them more cognizant of the primacy of the act, which would become one of the central concerns of existentialism, the most influential philosophical movement to emerge in the postwar period. This social, political, and philosophical legacy stimulated a pervasive movement in the visual arts in the United States, Europe, and Japan. [...] Although the end of World War II was greeted with relief throughout the world, any optimism that may have resulted was tempered by a certain hollowness, in light of the extraordinarily unprecedented destruction wrought by the war and the realization that the possibility of global annihilation was real. This split in consciousness encouraged and incubated activities that broke the traditional relationship between the art and the object, and the subject of art increasingly became its own making (1998, 17-8).

Schimmel seems to isolate the repercussion of that moment and its global influences for those who represent it artistically, in the visual arts, and in the Northern Hemisphere.¹² Nevertheless, Richard Kostelanetz used the term 'theatre of mixed means' to describe these artistic transformations, stressing that 'even though the artists doing them were not in contact with each other [...] without any information flow from one locus to the next. The changes must, then, have reflected something which was occurring in the various loci' (1994, 5). Like Kostelanetz, Dick Higgins (1978) stresses the fact that the first Happenings, which he situates as another artistic expression and practice within his coined term 'intermedia', took place in the United States, Europe, Brazil and Japan.

Beyond Kostelanetz and Higgins' terms, 'performance art' has proved a necessary concept to encircle a plethora of mo(ve)ments in different arts and hemispheres. Its results privileged the theatrical in the sense of live experience, and presence in the sense of demanding that the beholders 'take it into account' (Fried 1968, 146) in the simultaneous attendance of eyewitnesses and artists. The inclusive new medium allowed free circulation, recombination and exchanges amongst different disciplines, media, tools, instruments and methods in a direct liaison with the public. Critical questions were raised about the function of the arts and about commodification, market, creators, critics and audience's assumptions.

For Schimmel, 'this new focus on the act' by artists 'ends with the generation that matured during the aftermath of the Vietnam War and its legacy of global cynicism' (1998, 17). Nevertheless, the inheritance of performance art seems to persist. Blau acknowledges that 'performance' represents a still progressing expansion of the

¹² Nevertheless, he includes Guy Brett's essay 'Life Strategies: Overview and Selection Buenos Aires-London-Rio de Janeiro-Santiago de Chile' in his book *Out of Actions: between Performance and the Object 1949-1979* (1998). It unveils pervasive performance art being expressed in sites other than those usually covered by Western ethnocentrism.

'boundless artistic space that performance art conquered' (1992, 11). RoseLee Goldberg professed that

but above all history will provide its own regenerating force for performance. Even while it continues to be accepted as a medium in its own right, there is a built-in cyclical aspect to performance history. Throughout the twentieth century it has come and gone in waves, appearing as an irritant and a catalyst when any one prevailing style or art form becomes entrenched.[...] It will be different the next time around, because it will be responding to an entirely new set of cultural and artistic concerns and because no matter how accepted, the definition of performance remains open-ended (1984, 93).

Thence, performance as an instance, a reference, a field of studies or an umbrella concept is not the property of any field. Performance as an art form, genre and function continues going against every exclusive appropriation, refusing to be categorised and slipping between the boundaries of different arts. The acceleration of information amongst different sites and practices seems to ease this continued transformation. Nevertheless, this concern in categorising scenic works as either 'performance' or 'theatre' seems to replicate epistemological limits which refuse cross-fertilisation. This appears to be an anti-interdisciplinary prejudice and it will return as a subject in the following chapters. At this introductory moment, it may be said that this categorical concern is meaningless, at least in the case of La Fura. In an unpublished interview with the author, *furero* Jürgen Müller states that

for me, La Fura is doing theatre. I do not have this preoccupation if this is this [performance] or that [theatre]. For me, the fact that I prepare something between a show, a spectacle or a theatre piece, which is represented more than 10 or 20 times in front of an audience... then, for me this is a theatre piece. For me, we do theatre and we do theatre with all different artistic aspects because we are not pure or purist. They [the critics] call us total theatre but these are old terms. We do theatre which speaks the language of the moment.¹³

For Edward L. Schieffin, 'practices have an internal "logic" of their own, which provides the strategic rationality or purposive orderliness of "the ways things are done" in most ordinary cultural activity' (1998, 199). Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu, he says

¹³ Manchester, 14 May 1997.

that situations and participants in them are always only equivalent to each other, always different: thus practices invariably spring as improvisations. Thence, 'the relation between performance and practice turns on this moment of improvisation: performance embodies the *expressive dimension of the strategic articulation of practice*' (1998, 199). The italicised expression here could stand as his and my definition of performativity itself.

'Performance' and 'performativity's flexible and almost ubiquitous reach seems to supersede the common use of 'theatricality' applied to the study of everyday life's repetition of acts. This distinction could reserve theatricality for a conscious elaboration of options within the theatrical art. In this sense, performance may support this art in having acknowledged its technical and creative universes within a wider aesthetic frame, beyond restrictive ideas about theatre.

My comprehension of theatre therefore does not exclude other prospects nor does it terminate my attempt to grasp this art. Nevertheless, I am trying to delimit one understanding within such a plural conundrum of possibilities. 'Performance' may support such an intention but its conceptual ubiquity does not provide the focus on theatre that it is looked for here. Therefore, my final attempt at that signification may be to call attention to theatre as a language, rather than a practice either defined as dramatic literature or encapsulated in exclusive, linguistic, naturalist and disciplinary terms.

'Language' is used in a broader sense, apart from or beyond the meaning of spoken idiom. This use is ordinarily found in Romance languages such as Portuguese and Spanish, but not so common in English. The spoken, sung, sculpted, photographed, painted, danced and written word, sentences, dialogue or idiom are only parts of the almost infinite options within artistic languages.

Theatrical Languages

The concept of art as a language points to a Protean structure of specific universes of codes, systems, transformed or represented signs. As posited by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, 'a language is never closed upon itself, except as a function of impotence' (1988, 8). Antonin Artaud always insisted on a directly communicative language for theatre, a physical and plastic language of symbols, gestures, sounds and mise-en-scène instead of a supremacy of words: not against speech but for the senses. Jerzy Grotowski is an example of those who searched for 'an elementary language of signs and sounds – comprehensible beyond the semantic value of the word to a person who does not understand the language in which the play is performed' (1968, 24).

Joseph Melançon, taking his lead from linguistic studies of Greimas and Benveniste, points out that theatre can dissociate 'in time and space the semiotic from the semantic [and] syntactically call into play two levels of representation, the verbal and the scenic. It is this double articulation which makes possible all sorts of dissociations and tensions in language itself' (1982, 18). He quotes Benveniste on the same page to remind us that 'the artist creates his own semiotics', while Renato Cohen remembers Freud asserting that the work of art is characterised by transgressions: for not obeying grammar (1989, 37).

Simplifying to the extreme, Jean-François Lyotard's definition of theatricality was 'to Hide, to Show' (1976, 105). Taking his lead from this, Eric MacDonald comments on the fact that 'perhaps Plato banished theatre from his ideal Republic because the theatre, in the final analysis, continually refuses to tell its own truth, which, logically, precludes it from deciding on its own margin' (1993, 7). Maria M. Delgado reminds us that

numerous past attempts to provide a single definition of theatricality have proved unsatisfactory because of their reductive nature. Language cannot be pinned down. As a system in constant flux it is subject to modifications and shifts of meaning. What a given society may consider theatrical, another, different in social, historical

and political terms, may regard as untheatrical. Each term is capable of mutual contradiction (1993, 5).

Theatre may contradict margins or hide, show and instigate a culture, a society, a community or a person. Using Rilke's description of the work of art, quoted by Susan Sontag, art occurs when 'the extension of the regions of the individual sense happens' (1966, 300). In Georg Fuchs' words in 1910, theatre shows itself when an 'intensification of our existence' happens (1972, 231). In the theatrical performance area, theatre artists develop their language through distinct grammars which they will unfold or search for. The searched margins of theatrical language should perhaps be considered those limits that renew both the search and its searcher, the human being.

In his *Camera Lucida* (1982), Roland Barthes describes this artistic search as the pursuit for a *punctum*. For him, the *punctum* is what elevates a photograph above the *studium*, 'a classical body of information' (1982, 25-6) or 'a certain training, [...] always coded' (1982, 51). Although Barthes uses these terms for photography, they seem to befit the artistic search for a special value for a work of art. Bert O. States uses *punctum* to define 'a much rarer element' which is not present in all photographs or works of art and theatre; he assumes that 'the *punctum* constitutes, for Barthes, the personal value of the photograph and perhaps its value as a work of art, [...] above being simply what we expect' (1985, 11).

Punctum is mentioned here as a critical tool to approach an invisible motivation for artists: it means an inexhaustible field within which artists develop their works. *Punctum* instigates the theatrical creator and the beholder to accomplish a level of the personal, subjective, sublime or wished for expression and communication. *Punctum* is used in this thesis as a term to summarise the artists' search for renewed margins which may help her/him to achieve a *rasa*.

Rasa is another conceptual tool for this thesis; this term seems to define an ultimate objective of artists in employing their *puncta*. Whilst *punctum* is related to the artistic process and value, '*rasa*' is related to the achievement of this *punctum* by both the artist and the spectator, during or/and after the event. Susanne K. Langer defines *rasa*:

some of the Hindu critics, although they subordinate and even deprecate dramatic art in favor of literary elements it involves, understand much better than their Western colleagues the various aspects of emotions in the theatre, which our writers so freely and banefully confuse: the feelings experienced by the spectators, those presented as undergone by characters in the play, and finally the feeling that shines through the play itself – the vital feeling of the piece. This last they call *rasa*; it is a state of emotional knowledge, which comes only to those who have studied and contemplated poetry. It is supposed to be one of supernatural origin, because it is not like mundane feeling and emotion, but is detached, more of the spirit than of viscera, pure and uplifting (1953, 323).

Nevertheless, *rasa* is more than that. For Adya Rangacharya, *rasa* is 'the final state of relish or satisfaction' of both artists and beholders (1996, 38). For B. K. Takkar, it is 'the overall effect of the spectacle' (1984, 97). In Radha Vallabh Tripath's words,

rasa is the ultimate and from the point of view of the dramatist and the artist, the whole creative process of *Natya* [artistic practice] proceeds for its realisation. From the point of view of the spectator *rasa* is the state of consciousness in blissful enjoyment [...] not only immersed in aesthetic rapture through it, it also invests his conscience with *samskara* [belief, conviction], endowing a richer personality (1991, 25).

The Indian scholars above do not share the same 'supernatural' or intellectual pre-knowledge of poetry that Langer seems to stress. The Indian philosophy points out nine different kinds of *rasa*, including human relationships. *Rasa* could also be translated as vital juice.¹⁴ Langer sums it up as 'indeed, that comprehension of the directly experienced or "inward" life that all art conveys' (1953, 323).

Punctum and *rasa* are prominent terms in defining my understanding of theatrical language. Marranca confesses her uncertainty about the possibility of a specifically

¹⁴ See J.L. Masson and M.V. Patwardhan (1970), where they investigate *rasa* in two volumes.

theatrical performance language 'because the human body, the actor, is always representational; he will always remind the critic of the world beyond the stage' (1984, 132). Marranca seems to locate presence in what might be absorbed as negativity. Therefore, she seems to recall an anti-theatrical impulse as she observes:

contemporary experiments in theatre outline a history of displacements: the playwright superseded by the director/group, discursive language by the image, dialogue by the monologue, the ensemble by the solo performer. This constant throwing away of what is theatrical is, in its own way, an anti-theatrical impulse (1984, 136).

This 'throwing away' is opposed to a critical understanding of theatre as a language or the artists' search for it, for *punctum* or for *rasa*. The fundamental question is similar to the one raised by Fuchs, and the historical vanguards, or their desired retheatricalisation of theatre at the beginning of the twentieth century: 'a theatre which is not a theatre and does not wish to be one - is that not indeed a "locus a non lucendo", an innate absurdity?' (1972, 106).

The fact is that the history of displacements indicated by Marranca can also reveal a game of binarisms that prevent theatre being exercised to its full potential and reach. Stage machinist/poet, word/image, ensemble/solo, writer/director, performance text/written text and visual predominance/rhetorical and oral predominance are binomials that should not obstruct a wider totality of theatre. Rather, they should unfold a richness of available materials, elements and possibilities for/of a theatrical language.

Human presence is an intrinsic characteristic of theatre to be approached as an advantage: multiple, grounding and motivating. The presence in theatre of the human sign may always remind the critic, the artist and the spectator not only of the world beyond the stage, but hopefully beyond the world beyond the stage and/or the worlds inside themselves. For theatre as a language acknowledges the wide scope of rhizomatic liaisons with other disciplines and methods.

Umberto Eco points out that 'the semiotics of theatre is nothing but an arithmetic sum of the semiotic analysis of other forms of communication' (1977, 108). This statement of Eco emphasises the complexity of the semiotic task in dealing with the theatrical performance. Problematic also is the fact that the splitting of the theatrical performance for semiotics or any other method of analysis will always dismember the theatrical whole; theatre is supposed to be seen or lived as such, during its actual and unrepeatable existence.

While acknowledging the usefulness of theatre semiotics, States suggested that it is an incomplete discipline for 'its almost imperialistic confidence in its product; that is, the implicit belief that you have exhausted a thing's interests when you explained how it works as sign' (1985, 7). As Janelle G. Reinelt and Joseph R. Roach point out, 'a specific signifier means not only in relation to one other signifier that it is not but to a whole tissue of signifiers, potentially endless, through which meaning moves and slips in an elusive play of signification' (1992, 111). Theatre may transform the same sign into distinct, changed signifiers and meanings. Besides that, the possible or opted contradiction between sign and referent in the varied articulations of expressive means, icons, indexes and symbols in the theatrical event - and its sensorial, cognitive, plastic, choreological and musical possibilities - problematises the analysis of a language that cannot be reduced either to naturalistic works or exhausted by literary and linguistic methods.

Theatrical signs and their changing relations to the referent during a performance question these reductions. When semiotics approaches theatrical utterances as a system of codes, however, it necessarily dismembers its configuring totality. The video or the CD-ROM of the performance and the dramatic literature before a play's staging, help the theatre critics, including semioticians. However, these remain as incomplete tools or

limitations for analyses of theatre: a written text or a recorded video will not restore the theatrical event. This impossibility seems to establish partial views of this art.

The dismemberment of the theatrical *rasa* defaces the distinctiveness that characterises theatre. For States, this disfiguring of theatre splits ‘the perceptual impression theater makes on the spectator. And as Maurice Merleau-Ponty has said, “it is impossible... to decompose a perception to make it into a collection of sensations, because in it the whole is prior to the parts”’ (1985, 7). Peggy Phelan makes a similar acknowledgement when she uses discoveries of quantum physics to compare attempts to document or even write about performance (1992, 146-8). As macro-instruments transform microscopic particles during their attempts to measure the latter, performance’s totality is also altered, since the life of a performance is during its performing, when all its parts are composing a whole which is exposed to and transformed by the beholders.

Although developed out of linguistics, studies of theatre semiotics have been re-charting their limits and approaches, acknowledging a diversity of theatre forms and significance and the mutual exchanges between literary and performative texts. Within the diversity and spectacularity of theatre, a new semiotic approach had to acknowledge the intertextual negotiations that happen in contemporary theatre.¹⁵

Within the theatrical diversity of the 1970s, Patrice Pavis is one of the semioticians who acknowledged an extra-literary theatre, providing an alternative view of the totality of this live art. This view is based on the so-called performance text and not on the theological presence of the author. The predominance of exclusive works on staged written texts has been replaced by another idea of the theatrical text in a semiology which approaches different theatre forms and slipping meanings, not

¹⁵ On theatre semiotics see Eco (1977), Barthes (1979), Basnett-McGuire (1980), Elam (1980), Pavis (1981), Aston and Savona (1991), Valentini (1991) and/or Fischer-Lichte (1992).

'intimated any longer by the genre that is specifically theatre but encompassing all types of performance' (1981, 77).

Human beings manipulating human signs or creating their own semiotics in artistic performances elude analytical languages. Therefore, theatre semiotics assume their impossible tasks and open up the attempts to analyse performance language (Elam 1980). Examining some of the epistemological revisions in theatre semiotics that followed the theatrical diversity seen during the 1980s, Valentina Valentini concluded that there are no conflicts between the literary and visual texts in contemporary theatre; both theory and practice consider both literary and visual dramaturgies as autonomous and mutually constitutive (1991, 26). Taking this lead further with Barthes (1977, 1979), the theatre text may be initially acknowledged and approached as a woven structure, which is composed by an intertextual relationship between the written text, the conceived juxtaposition of ideas (if there is no written text) and the performance text.

This intertextuality occurs within theatrical language, which combines kinetic, proxemic, sensorial, cognitive, semantic and intersemiotic articulations, games, tensions and dissociations. They may interfere in each other's domain depending on the creativity of the artists or participants involved in the manipulation of 'this polyphonic density of signs' (Barthes 1979, 29-30).

Barthes, MacDonald, States, Valentini and Phelan are some of the cultural theorists who undo assumed certainties about definitive readings and remind us that semiotics should not and cannot be confused any longer with a unique or "correct" interpretation of codes, meanings and messages. Exclusive and disciplinary ideas around the limits of theatrical representation and criticism have been shattered. As an example, States defends semiotics and phenomenology as complementary and necessary perspectives on theatre, art and the world. For him, if you 'lose the sight of

your phenomenal eye and you become a Don Quixote (everything is something else); lose the sight of your significative eye and you become Sartre's Roquentin (everything is nothing but itself)' (1985, 8).

Marranca has defended a specifically theatrical performance language which should not be anthropological, literary, filmic, psychoanalytic or philosophical (1984, 132). Nevertheless, the mentioned areas should not be considered as clouding the specificity of the theatrical language. In my understanding, artistic languages, including theory and practice, are permeated by interdisciplinary exchanges which materialise and analyse the arts' objects, texts and performances.

The artistically multidisciplinary reality of theatre implies a challenge that needs more than the binocular view defended by States. Theatrical art's multiple aspects related to its perception during its performances and possible repercussion on the surrounding environment, seem to justify an interdisciplinary approach. Poststructuralist studies or/and psychoanalysis, anthropology, philosophy, history, sociology, linguistics, arts, hermeneutics and deconstructive critique may indicate this.¹⁶ The interdisciplinary potential and practice of theatre in its exchanges with other arts has amplified this challenge: the overlooking and denial of this ever-changing language may sustain a discrepancy between theatrical criticism and the potential of practice.

Language is also an ever-expanding interdiscipline which nurtures and feeds from other disciplines that it traverses. Discipline here has not to be understood as a reductive concept if compared to the 'undisciplined' or 'antidisciplinary' core of the arts. Taking his lead from Piaget, Geraldo Orthoff describes discipline or a disciplinary field as a specific body of knowledge with its own methods, procedures and contents (1994, 3). This choice of Orthoff's definition is deliberate for its conceptual opening that may also encompass the arts without restricting their boundless spaces.

¹⁶ For an introduction on these multiple supports on criticism see Barry (1996). On the same objective relating to theatre criticism see Fortier (1997).

The use of the concept 'theatrical language' aims to make visible and to support an interdisciplinary connecting in theatre of 'semiotic chains, organizations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles', as posited by Deleuze and Guattari in their defence of the metaphor of rhizome as a model for another system of criticism (1988, 7). Language associated with theatre in this research also utilises the idea of Deleuze and Guattari's 'abstract machine'. This abstract machine, that theatre or language can be, goes beyond linguistic models which do not 'connect a language to the semantic and pragmatic contents of statements, to collective assemblages of enunciation, to a whole micropolitics of the social field' (1988, 7).¹⁷

'Language' is allied to the adjective 'theatrical' in order to attempt a synthesis of the expanding universe of options of expression and communication within dilating theatrical margins. Theatre as a language is a chemistry amongst the *punctum* and *rasa* of agents and beholders dealing with the interplay of this art's proxemic, kinetic, sensorial and cognitive potentials.

The transformation of theatrical language should not and cannot be relegated to a second place behind restrictive definitions of this art. The authoritative and binary denials of other forms of theatre dramaturgy besides the 'literary' and/or predominantly verbal are gainsaid within contemporary practices. If compared to this practice, a binary emphasis on literary narrative seems no longer compatible since the beginning of the twentieth century. If the dictatorship of image is pointed to as the 'new' path, it incurs the same exclusive mistake. Within the eclecticism of the 1980s and 1990s, several scenic arts groups and artists in different parts of the world have been crossing languages and performing different balances of the physical, visual, sonic and choreographic aspects of theatre. Theatre is a huge diversity of artistic manifestations in front of beholders. There are as many theatres as our possibility of thinking, applying and making them may attest to.

¹⁷ For an introduction on Deleuze and Guattari's abstract machine, see Mazzumi (1988).

Theatre has also been opting for slippage, montage, discontinuity, collage, bricolage, juxtaposition, physicality and fragmentation. There is an emphasis on the performance text, spectacle and/or *mise en-scène*, on the now-here experience and the sensorial game. There is similar support from other media and the latest technologies which, without contradicting the liveness of theatre, creates a tension which is not foreign either to the increasing predominance of these technologies in our lives or to theatre itself.¹⁸

Distinct features may be listed underlining 1980s and 1990s theatres: improvisation, autobiographies, collective devising and authorship. They place parallel stress on process, play, parody, fun, freedom, chance, spontaneity and interdisciplinarity. These characteristics and others may be re-combined through the use or juxtaposition of distinct methods or in infinite composition with artistic and non-artistic media and structures of organisation for composing artistic works-in-progress. The legacy of the 1960s still operates within these theatres that also connect themselves to the historic vanguards of the beginning of the century. This cross-fertilisation will be outlined in the next section and further elaborated in the following chapters 1, 2 and 3.

My understanding of theatre seeks not to limit it but the academic objectives of this research demand a focus on certain aspects. To select artistically interdisciplinary theatre as a focus may delineate further not only an objective but also a frame for this investigation.

If artistic hybridism cannot be denied throughout the twentieth century, artistic interdisciplinary processes in theatre can no longer be ignored in their conspicuous presence at the end of the century. Nick Kaye stresses that the task to categorise the arts within the postmodern condition is 'to characterise that which is disruptive of categories and categorisations and which finds its identity through an evasion of disruption of

¹⁸ La Fura, Robert Lepage, Els Joglars, The Wooster Group, Robert Wilson, La Cubana, Pina Bausch, XPTO, Philip Gentl, or La La La Human Steps are examples of this negotiation.

conventions', acknowledging that 'the "postmodern" occurs as unstable, "theatrical" and, in certain senses, "interdisciplinary" evasions of definition and foundation' (1994, 3).

'Interdisciplinarity' may be outlined as the process of exchange amongst different disciplines. Augé reminds us that 'such exchanges and grafts are common in – indeed constitutive of – the history of disciplines', composing 'an insurmountable intellectual tension, of which we find numerous manifestations in the history of exchanges between the disciplines, in the history of history, and in the history of the social sciences in general' (1999, 2). 'Artistic interdisciplinarity', therefore, comprises and focuses on the negotiation amongst different artistic disciplines.

This study looks at this artistically interdisciplinary presence in theatre. Theatre's confines have been enlarged through exchanges with other arts. These amplified margins challenge restrictive and reductive analyses about theatre. Artistic interdisciplinarity has been a ground for transformations and therefore should be acknowledged in contemporary critical analyses of this art.

Artistic Interdisciplinarity

The whole scope of artistic works that 'performance' may encompass includes performance art, dance-theatre, physical theatre and music theatre. Performance, therefore, embraces those works which have been overlapping disciplinary contents and forms amongst the arts throughout their histories. Without attempting to be exhaustive, there are many examples of exchanges within distinct artistic disciplines during the 1980s and 1990s. Barbara Kruger, Jenny Holzer, Cindy Sherman, Gillian Wearing, DV-8, Pina Bausch, Magui Marin, Michel Laub, Alain Plattel, Min Tanaka, Claudia Trajano and Sergio Ulhoa, Shankai Juku, Laurie Anderson, Carles Santos, Heiner Goebbels, Jan Fabre, La Fura, Royal de Luxe and De La Guarda may relate their works principally to

one, or more artistic disciplines. They equally place their artistic works beyond conventional disciplinary constraints, or fixed artistic borders.

The crossing of boundaries amongst the artistic disciplines, the acknowledgement of uncertainty and doubt and its consequent distrust of definitive categorisations that could reduce the free plurality of manifestations are so-called postmodernist features. Nevertheless, these characteristics can be found in other periods of history and in what has been recognised as a twentieth-century proclivity. Susan Sontag has named this tendency as a Surrealist tradition, present in all the arts,

united by the idea of destroying conventional meanings, and creating new meanings or counter meanings through radical juxtaposition (the “collage principle”). [...] Art so understood is obviously animated by aggression, aggression toward the presumed conventionality of its audience and, above all, aggression toward the medium itself (1966, 269).

She explained that this happened through the general challenging of accepted frontiers between the ‘scientific’ and ‘literary-artistic’ cultures, ‘art’ and ‘non-art’, form and content, ‘high’ and ‘low’ cultures. Sontag seems to be naming modern dichotomies being raided by new times. She also pointed out contributions from industrial technology, commercial processes and imagery, purely private and subjective fantasies and dreams. New arts expressions were questioning those limits which would include/deny the particular versus universal, the global against local, ‘pure’ art juxtaposed to ‘engaged’ art, or originality versus reproduction.

Sontag spreads this questioning throughout the twentieth century, from its first decades to the 1960s. Kenneth Coutts-Smith agrees that an undeniable revolution in aesthetic values at the beginning of the last century ‘was part of a complete cultural re-orientation which covered all of our areas of experience, our view on society, our inner experience and our ways of perceiving’ (1966, 5). The North-American universities in 1964-65 and the University of Peking in 1965 started witnessing protests and a fight for civil and personal rights which spread over Europe and Latin America in the late years

of that decade. For Herbert Molderings the events in Paris in May 1968 revealed a continuation of the re-orientation mentioned previously by Coutts-Smith (1984, 170).

Youth movements expressed an expanding crisis of values, proposing and fighting for changes. Some of the main requests were pacifism, sexual liberation, feminism, solidarity with the oppressed regions and classes, and changes in the higher education institutions, in the strict structures and in the artistic representation of the contemporaneous societies. For Molderings, 'in the field of artistic work this meant that art became an integral part of political and social activities. Practiced as performance, art became ephemeral and fragmented like all the other activities of life [attempting] to provoke a new awareness of social habits and to create interrelations between various patterns of cultural behavior' (1984, 170).

The libertarian and utopian movements of the 1960s and 1970s had a strong politicised drive in their desire for changes. However, the culture of the masses, consumerism, reproduction media, publicity, non politicised drives and apolitical works were also present in pop art, for instance. Nevertheless, even the apolitical works do not avoid assuming a political position. Pop art was also shattering so called modernist dichotomies and concepts of artistic legitimacy and authenticity.¹⁹

According to Sontag, 'painters no longer feel themselves confined to canvas and paint [...] Musicians have reached beyond the sounds of the traditional instruments' (1966, 296-7). She also mentions Antoni Gaudí's buildings in Catalonia as an example of the Surrealist tradition in architecture. Although she cannot ignore Artaud within her Surrealist tradition, she does not elaborate further the transformations happening in theatre. RoseLee Goldberg indicates 'avant-garde artists and musicians, not theatre directors, [as those] who would trigger a rethinking of the very nature of performance'

¹⁹ On pop art and its shattering of modernist canons see Robert Hughes in Wallis (1984) or in Veloso and Madeira's chapter 8 (1999).

(1998, 63). Nevertheless, theatre artists of the 1960s no longer felt confined either to the literary and mimetic theatre, or the proscenium-stalls relationship, with its characteristics related to linear plot and narrativity, characters, dialogues and naturalist acting and settings.

Beyond disciplinary responsibilities, both authors may call our attention to the interdisciplinary exchange amongst arts again assuming a strong position after the historic vanguards at the beginning of the century. If the primacy of the act and theatricality were again key features, it could be naive to isolate theatre from this general transformation in artistic territories. Arthur Sainer recalls that in the mid-1960s and the 1970s,

everything came into question: the place of the performer in the theatre; the place of the audience; the function of the playwright and the usefulness of a written script; the structure of the playhouse, and later, the need for any kind of playhouse; and finally, the continued existence of theatre as relevant force in a changing culture (1975, 15).

Eugène van Erven indicates similar links 'between the sociopolitical events of the mid and late sixties, left-wing concepts of culture, and the emergence of radical theatre in Europe and the US' (1988, 145).

Richard Kostelanetz recalls that the experimental was deeply favoured with the exploration of potential shapes of space, an indefinite conception of time and the representation of it (1970, 7-8). He also mentions unconventional stage rhythms, the embodiment of a rejection of linear form and explanatory truth, the existence of 'narrative more as a convention than a revelatory structure of primary component' (1970, 9). For Kapila Malik Vatsyayan, 'the inadequacy of the "word", the dissatisfaction with the theoretical dependence on Aristotle's mimesis and the confrontation with Eastern traditions helped to create the new form of theatre, which broke away from naturalism and realism' (1971, 19).

The shattering of modernist positions during those years still permeates postmodernist debates on arts. Charles Jencks, who is considered to have coined the term to describe an emergent tendency in architecture in the early 1960s, situates that decade as the infancy of postmodernism (1987, 9). If critics had to defend different arguments about modernism in the arts it happened because there was a meaningful amount of work created against a unique version of modernist art. Although there is an acknowledgement of the historical context and the diversity of modernism, it may be said that modernist art has been linked to a reductive disciplinary centring and objecthood. Postmodernist arts are associated with cross-disciplinary perspectives and theatricality opening up the limits of the art object, materiality, visibility, function and representation or presentation.

The emphasis on the 1960s and 1970s is raised here because the period displays a series of transformations in the theatrical language which has continued up until our time. They continue to provide a framework to approach contemporary theatre companies such as La Fura.²⁰ This pivotal presence of interdisciplinarity within the arts will be approached in the first and second chapters of this thesis. The third and fourth chapters relate this cross-disciplinary legacy of the 1960s and 1970s to Spain, Catalonia and La Fura. This introduction and the first chapters, therefore, set the scene for the investigation of artistic interdisciplinarity in La Fura's theatre during the 1980s, which this thesis proposes as an addition to a twentieth century tradition of retheatricalising theatre.

If Sontag privileges fine arts and music in her Surrealist tradition which crosses the twentieth century (1966), Valentina Valentini suggests the existence of a similar

²⁰ See Kostelanetz (1970, 1994); Sainer (1975), and Erven (1988) to have different and complementary views on these changes and their presence in theatre during the 1960s and 1970s. On the decades of 1970s and 1980s see Marranca (1984) and Sánchez (1999), and Ferrer and Saumell (1988). On the 1990s theatre, see Valentini (1991), Huxley and Witts (1996), and Goldberg (1998).

'new tendencies tradition' in theatre. It has been initiated by what has been studied as the 'historical vanguards' from the first third of the century (Cohen 1989, Valentini 1991, Innes 1993, Sánchez 1994, 1999, amongst others). Adolphe Appia, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Gordon Craig and Antonin Artaud's practice and theories are the main names of the historical vanguards. Valentini's proposal fills in Sontag's omission of theatre characteristics and, in a certain sense, locates theatre within the Surrealist tradition when she recalls theatre's

sort of love/hate in relation to the stage. The programme of the the first years of the twentieth century's theatre modifiers radically intended to re-invent the relationship between each of the elements of the stage: it conceived the show as a movement machine, which would imply projecting a dynamic and flexible scenic space, conceiving an event able to integrate the subjectivity and objectivity, the individual (the live actor in the stage) as well as the general (the social and historical context) (1991, 13).²¹

Valentina's 'new tendencies tradition' is close to the 'defamiliarisation of old defamiliarisations', a term proposed by Bert O. States to encompass the traditional successions of trespassed conventions within twentieth century theatre (1985, 43).

What may be found in common in these positions of Sontag, States and Valentini on artistic transformations throughout the twentieth century is the artistically interdisciplinary drive which has been acting towards the exploitation of other artistic objects and representations. The most valuable definition of interdisciplinarity for this study is provided by Roland Barthes':

Interdisciplinarity is not the calm of an easy security; it begins *effectively* (as opposed to the mere expression of a pious wish) when the solidarity of the old disciplines breaks down – perhaps even violently, via the jolts of fashion – in the interests of a new object and a new language, neither of which has a place in the field of the sciences that were to be brought peacefully together: it is precisely this uneasiness with classification which permits the diagnosis of a certain mutation (1977, 155).

²¹ 'Mena d'amor-odi en relació amb l'escenari. [...] El programa dels reformadors del teatre dels primer anys del segle XX intentava de reinventar radicalment la relació entre cadascun dels elements de l'escena: concebia l'espectacle com una màquina del moviment, cosa que significava projectar un lloc escènic dinàmic i plasmable, imaginar un esdeveniment capaç d'integrar el subjectiu i l'objectiu, l'individual – l'actor viu a l'escenari – i el general – el context històric i social.'

As a central focus of this research, interdisciplinarity will permeate this whole thesis. At the moment, Barthes' definition may be added to Geraldo Orthoff's open concept of discipline and Marc Augé's recall of the constitutive role that the exchange amongst disciplines represents to the disciplines.²² The three authors' are fundamental in encompassing the main features of the interdisciplinarity that I am taking into account, within a scope of various uses of the concept that sometimes may be restrictive or faithless. Chapters 1 and 2 aim to elaborate further this thesis' account of interdisciplinarity and artistic interdisciplinarity.

The objective of this research in investigating artistically interdisciplinary theatre is sharpened by two other attempts to maintain a focus within this chosen determination. Firstly, the option to centre the study on the so-called unwritten theatre. This move aims to locate this research away from the idea of theatre as the domain of words, dialogue and linearity within a naturalist tradition. Alan Read (1993) or Bim Mason (1992) are some of the authors who expressed their concerns about the recognition, retrieving and reviewing of unwritten theatre, a significant part of performative forms that a bias toward the literary in criticism and teaching does not cover.

The second option attached to the objective of examining artistic interdisciplinary theatre is represented by the choice of the other main object of study of this research: La Fura dels Baus. By focusing on La Fura's practice this thesis aims to accompany and conceive other potentialities and dimensions of theatre. The interdisciplinary creations of the ensemble might explain the confused reactions to the company's 'artistic logic', which I begin to explore in the following section. The ensemble from Barcelona will be both a means and a focus to examine artistic interdisciplinary theatre in the late twentieth century. Both the active permanence of the group throughout the two last decades of the century and the international repercussion of its works provide this

²² Consult pages 24 and 27 of this Introduction.

research with a visible example of contemporaneous theatre. La Fura challenges outdated perspectives on theatre and as such can be seen to testify to the diversity and strength of a theatre which keeps on defying fixed conventions. Furthermore, the practice of the *fureros* (as the members of the group are referred to in Catalonia and Spain) may attest to a continuous mutation in theatrical language which is a fundamental index to indicate an artistically interdisciplinary work.

La Fura dels Baus

Twenty years after its inception on 13 May 1979, La Fura closed 2000 having achieved an international and public recognition that is not common amongst theatre companies. Beyond theatrical practice, the ensemble has divided its activities into other artistic fields. Crossing artistic disciplinaries still seems to be a main feature of La Fura.

Their first, amateur, street theatre tour with a cart and a mule performing *Vida i Miracles del Pagès Terino i la seva Dona Teresina (Life and Miracles of the Peasant Terino and his Wife Teresina)* through Catalonia occurred in 1979. It conspicuously differs from the simultaneous and distinct performances of the group in 2000 in numerous countries. These performances include the opera *D.Q., Don Quixote en Barcelona* at Barcelona's Liceu (the opera house is one of the great symbols of the Catalan elites and *Catalaness*), the seventh work of the *lenguaje furero* *ØBS* at the Mercat de les Flors (a polyvalent theatre in Barcelona) and other 'alternative' spaces in Europe, the music theatre production *White Foam* at the Wagnerbüro Halle (an abandoned factory in Gratz, Austria), a macro-performance *Inana & Sons* in the outdoor spaces of the Hanover Expo 2000 and a video art *Rojo (Red)* in an auditorium in Diagonal Illa (a shopping centre in Barcelona). Appendix 1 presents La Fura's full chronology of works from 1979 to 2000. These works can be divided into three periods.

The first period (1979-83) encompasses a phase spent in the streets of Barcelona and Catalonia. Leaving Moià in 1978, Marcel·lí Antúnez (born in 1959), Carles Padrís (b. 1959) and Pere Tàrrades (b. 1960) founded the group in 1979. The questions related to La Fura's inception and works must be asked within a specific context with global connections. No theatrical work happens in a contextual or aesthetic void. The national dimension of a supermodern Catalan culture and the site of Barcelona are the requisite dimension to be included in any study of La Fura. It is the Foucaultian account of 'site' that this study bears in mind here. Site is taken here to include the 'articulations among conceptions of time and space, and the relationships between histories, cultures and biographies', as described by Sarah Radcliff and Sallie Westwood (1996, 24).

Such an enterprise to study the case of La Fura has to deal with the entwined sites of the Spanish State and the Catalan Nation. Chapter 3 will deal with this axis formed by both sites but some detail seems necessary here. Catalonia has a history that is constructed as beginning in 874 when the Moors were expelled and *Guilfré el Pelòs* (Wilfred the Hairy) established himself as the first independent Count of Barcelona.²³ Uniting diverse tribes and lands, he established the Catalan kingdom. Catalonia achieved an imperialist Mediterranean expansion from the twelfth to the fourteenth centuries in a union with Aragon. In 1469, through the marriage of Fernando V of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile, Catalonia was gradually incorporated as a region within the Spanish State, although maintaining some of the nation's historic rights.

A permanent tension between centralisation and integration to the forces of the Spanish State and moves towards decentralisation and separatism from them has marked the relationship of Spain and the Catalan nation since the marriage of the

²³ The Roman colony of Julia Augusta Faventia Paterna Barcino was founded during the times of the emperor Augusto, between the years 10 and 15 BC. Before the arrival of the Romans, the territory was inhabited by Iberian villages. For an introduction on Catalan history see Porcell i Pujol (1992), Vives (1992) and Sobrer (1992). For an overall view see Vilar (1988) and Esteve (1998). Excepting Vives, all these other historians published or broadcast their works after the Francoist dictatorship which prohibited allusions to the history of a Catalan nation, instead of a Spanish region.

Catholic Kings Fernando and Isabella. Felipe V's decree in 1717, known as *Nueva Planta*, imposed the Castilian language and aimed to destroy Catalonia's autonomy and historic rights. Nevertheless, David George and John London affirm that in the mid-nineteenth century, 'a renewed sense of Catalan identity, coinciding with the growth of an independent-minded liberal bourgeoisie' and the European Romanticism was a prominent feature of a 'wider cultural renaissance known as the *Reinaxença*, during which Catalan re-emerged as a literary language after three centuries of confinement to virtual patois status' (1996, 11). This historical axis formed by both State and nation is a prominent interest of this thesis in attempting a reading of La Fura's site and identity.

Primo de Rivera's dictatorship from 1923 to 1930 represented new attempts to suppress Catalan nationhood (Vilar 1988, Terradas 1990, Ucelay da Cal 1995, Hooper 1995). The expansion of the political branch or *Catalanism* did not diminish though; it achieved a climax in 1931-32 while the Catalan claims for more autonomy were supported by the new Republican government of Spain. Manuel Castells points out that 'the satisfaction of nationalist demands from *Catalunya* and the Basque Country by the Spanish Republic was one of the most powerful triggers of the military insurrection that provoked the 1936-39 Civil War' (1997, 46). The defeat of Barcelona in 1939 interrupted the brief experience of a Catalan State and ended the conflict commanded by the *generalísimo* Francisco Franco. It started an intense attack and censorship on any possibility of the public use, teaching or dissemination of Catalan, Basque or Galician languages which permeated Franco's dictatorship from 1939 to 1975.

The 1940s in Spain disclosed 'a retrograde attempt at reruralization and the imposition of obsolescent Catholic moral values' (Labanyi 1995, 398). A succession of fascist and abusive acts of Francoism forced a *reespañolización* of Catalonia and marked a political, cultural and economic ostracism of Spain until the 1960s. The dictatorship ended with the death of the dictator on 20 November 1975: before and after

that, Francoism and *Spanishification* forces were paralleled by a Catalan cultural resistance.

The demise of Franco was succeeded by an intense process of change within the Spanish State which was known as the democratic transition (1975-82). La Fura was formed within this renewed context and a year after the promulgation of the 1978 Constitution. The first period of the group was characterised by highly changeable compositions of the group performing in the streets and *plazas* of Barcelona and in Catalan *fiestas* as a '*grup d'animació*' (animation group) – a term used to refer to those groups who were hired to provide public entertainment.

A fixed group of nine performers was gradually established in the period up to 1982. In addition to the trio from Moià, Miki Espuma (b. 1959), Pep Gatell (b. 1958), Àlex Ollè (b. 1960), Jürgen Müller (b. 1955) and Hansel Cereza (b. 1957) joined the company. Roger Blavà (b. 1959) and Jordi Arús (b. 1959) alternated as the ninth *furero*: nine was the number of passengers legally allowed to be transported in the group's van. All of these men had eclectic backgrounds with diverse professional experiences, and unfinished courses and performances in different artistic areas. This first period of the group's trajectory is the main objective of chapter 4.

Although La Fura gradually added distinct features to the street theatre practice in early 1980s Barcelona, the group started its trajectory in the creative vacuum of the pattern initiated by Els Joglars' sketch-structured, movement- and image-based theatre and Els Comediants' *fiesta*-based theatre. Both groups, founded in 1962 and 1971 respectively, are part of a first generation of *Teatro Independiente* and outline a main connection of La Fura (one of the groups of the second generation) to this phase of alternative Spanish theatre in the period from the early 1960s to around 1980.

The *Teatro Independiente* (TI) was a nation-wide front against the Francoist regime. In Catalonia, the movement emphasised a reaction to the dictatorship's

oppression of Catalan identity. The independent movement was also the Spanish and Catalan location of the international alterations of theatrical language within the 1960s and 1970s.

La Fura's first period came to an end with the first performance of *Accions* (1983). The new production was distanced from the earlier aesthetics of the ensemble and started the second period of the group (1984-89) when they also devised and performed *Suz/o/Suz* (1985-91) and *Tier Mon* (1988-90). This change in the company's work happened at an intersection of *el desencanto* (disenchantment) and a counterbalancing movement which was known as *la movida madrileña*.

The failed *coup d'état* on 23 February 1981 reminded Spaniards of the fragility of their democracy and accentuated a general mood of disenchantment that prevailed in the latter years of the Spanish transition (1979-82), known as *desencanto*. For Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi, it 'succeeded the immediate post-1975 political and sexual euphoria' (1995, 396). For Labanyi, the *desencanto* 'was a response to a lack of clear-cut political alternatives, articulated by the left's ironic catchphrase [...] "Things were better with Franco"' (1995, 397).

La movida was the counterbalancing mood in different sites of Spain but it was principally fermented in Madrid. For Emma Dent Coad, the term was applied to 'a combination of political and cultural freedom, increased political income, and the desire to break with the past of a new generation born in the 1950s and 1960s' (1995, 376). For Gerard Imbert (1986)²⁴ or Graham and Antonio Sánchez (1995), *la movida* anticipated in its manifestations an acknowledgement of a postmodernist Spain which they describe as radically altered by social and economic decentering, cultural fragmentation, coexistence of the archaic and the modern and 'the erosion of traditional

²⁴ See Gerard Imbert, 'El Madrid de la "movida"', *El País*, 25 January 1986, pp. 10-11.

forms of social and political solidarity and the predominance of money in a hierarchy of social values' (1995, 407-14).

Labanyi and Graham point out a similarity to British punk, but in Spain it was 'a response not to unemployment but to affluence and the new sexual permissiveness: [...] as a delayed form of 1960s culture, but of an aggressively apolitical nature' (1995, 423). The appropriation of punk aesthetics and attitudes succeeds the influence of hippie elements in the *fureros*'s move from their first street theatre period to the second period initiated with the performance of *Accions* in Sitges.

An expanded version, *Accions: Alteració Física d'un Espai* (1984) was performed six months later in an abandoned building in Drassanes, near Barcelona's harbour. The option of that unusual space echoed and re-articulated a similar choice – or reaction to the surrounding circumstances – practised in the *Teatro Independiente*. The choice also matched with the plans of the group in being 'una organización delictiva dentro del panorama actual del arte' (a delinquent organisation within the current art panorama) according to the *Manifiesto Canalla* (*Swinish Manifesto*) signed by the group and written by Antúnez and Andrés Morte (b. 1955).²⁵ Morte assumed the management of the ensemble in 1984. While Roger Blava left the ensemble in 1984, Antúnez, Arús, Cereza, Espuma, Gatell, Müller, Ollè, Padrisa and Tantinyà made up the nine man team in question until 1990.

The three productions developed within this period, *Accions*, *Suz/o/Suz* and *Tier Mon* were responsible for developing a theatrical aesthetics that was to be known as *lenguaje furero*. These productions and their performance texts are described and analysed further in chapter 5. In an earlier paper I have described other characteristics of this language:

the artistic interdisciplinarity which might be considered an inherent potential of the theatrical expression is fully manifested in La Fura's theatre, where the literary

²⁵ The *Manifiesto* was distributed at the public performances of *Accions* in 1984. It can be read in Rojo (1984, 123) or in de la Torre (1992, 93-4).

has to share and ultimately loses out in its trying for space with the visual and the plastic, the aural and the musical, the kinetic, the sensorial and the physical. [...] The unconventional spaces where they perform also frame a continuous transformation through the constant move of themselves and the audience in a dynamic game where the energy created is almost palpable. [...] A semiotic approach would need some time to attempt schematising the signs being transformed by a chorus without rehearsal in an aural-visual assemblage in constant movement. The *furero* masquerade tests your sensorial awareness to deal with a choreography that has been created without you but counting on you. [...] The personal scores, cues and actions they have to perform, are going to have to be undertaken among and with the audience. We do not have much time to analyse. The time does not help because you have to run. Or you are pushed. Either you stumble into another member of the audience or into the performer trying to get to some other place in the venue. [...] The show has started and you are performing without rehearsals amongst hundreds of others who are in the same situation. Hundreds of performances happen at the same time. Rehearsed performers encounter new partners each night in a continuous improvisation, risking either some bones here and their own lives there or even a hostile audience, collision and injury. You can never have complete control over the scene being played as you are used to doing when you sit in the dark amongst the invisible audience of conventional theatre. Who are the actors? La Fura shares questions. And these questions are lived out during the performances (Villar de Queiroz 1999, 250-1).

The *lenguaje furero* can be seen to comprise four main features or a fourfold concept of theatre. First, the authors were also the designers, directors, producers, artists, musicians and performers of the productions, with few collaborators such as Ramón Rey (lights) or Ian Britton (guitar player). Second, the *fureros'* option for performing their artistic alchemy in 'found' spaces or non-theatrical venues. Third, the co-existence of spectators and performers in the same performing area. Fourth, the exchanges with different arts, such as music, fine arts, performance art and dance. These features will be investigated further in chapters 6, 7 and 8. Until 1989, these four sets of aspects were fully exercised in *Accions*, *Suz/o/Suz* and *Tier Mon*.

In 1989, Antúnez was invited by his colleagues to leave the group. The company then begins its third and current period of diversification of activities in different artistic disciplines such as opera, dance, publicity, public events and cinema. Different collaborators have been working with La Fura such as actor John Wagland, actors and singers Vidi Vidal and Miguel Bosé, actor and dancer Abraham Hurtado, singers Diamanda Gallas or Ginesa Ortega, video maker and academic Rebecca Allen,

musicians Ryuichi Sakamoto, Peter Gabriel, Joan Matabosch or Led Zeppelin's John Paul Jones, computer experts Jordi Casinos and Sergi Jordà, fine artists Jaume Plensa and Roland Olbeter, amongst many other visual artists, choreographers, administrators, musicians, and dramaturgs. Arús left the group in 1994. Throughout the 1990s, performers have been selected by auditions for works which are directed by one or more founder *fureros*.

The exchanges with other artists and disciplines and virtual technology have transformed the features that used to mean *lenguaje furero*. Nevertheless, the first trilogy encircles a continuous investigation and solidification of the aesthetics of the group which this study argues as an achieved artistic interdisciplinarity. The three productions of the first trilogy or the features of the *lenguaje furero* seem to display the different issues and questions relating to this achievement.

The choice of the period 1979-89 under analysis in this study is not haphazard. The term from 1979 to 1983 may provide us - or not - with the background to or fermentation of this interdisciplinarity. The three productions from 1983 to 1989 configure the main object of this study for different reasons. They seem to gather all the interconnected features which built up the artistic interdisciplinary theatre developed by the group. Those works from *Accions* to *Tier Mon* unfold specific traits which achieved a dialectical mutation in their interplay with different arts. Although other productions of the group during and after those years also present artistic interdisciplinary nuances, the three productions were the first to gather the four mentioned features. They may exemplify a positive achievement of theatre's attempts to transform itself, formally, contextually and conceptually. Such an achievement should not be overlooked by theatrical studies. In addition to that, the theatrical productions revealed an uneasiness in regards to categorisation that has been repeated by different critics and reviewers across the Americas, Europe, Australia and Japan during the last quarter of this century.

Going through the extensive press files of La Fura in Gavà, Barcelona, one may find different opinions, ideas, attempted definitions and labels attached to the group in reviews throughout the company's history. Drawing on Deleuze's *Foucault* (1986), Mariza Veloso and Angélica Madeira point out that no historic epoch preexists its own visibilities and sayings (1999, 46). For Mary Kelly, 'historically specific means of organization, circulation, distribution, not only determine the reception – reading, viewing, reviewing, reworking – of artistic texts, but also have an effect on the signifying practices themselves' (1984, 101). Moreover, the published reviews on La Fura's works did not cover a lack of systematised studies on the ensemble but document some of the reception to the ensemble's productions.

Recalling the necessary epistemological revision of theatre within a crisis of meanings that marks the end of the twentieth century, I want now to juxtapose a list of labels attached to La Fura's productions in distinct cities, countries and idioms during the last twenty years. Many of them seem to reveal the awkwardness of critics and reviewers in dealing with the transformations of the theatrical language, exemplified by La Fura's artistic interdisciplinary theatre. Moreover, this response recognises the ensemble's transgressive nature and the fact that categorisations and readings of their work proved a difficult task for both liberal and conservative critics. Quotes are included in their original languages to stress the international nature of these responses. I am going to include their translations to English between brackets to facilitate the reading.

Some of the critics of La Fura have recognised the difficulty in approaching or commenting on such a different manner of practising theatre. They have shared their doubts: '¿Es teatro lo que hace "La Fura"?' (Is theatre what La Fura does?). 'É teatro del teppismo o critica implicita della violenza? [...] Post-punk o teatro della crudeltà?' (Is it Thespian theatre or implicit critique to violence? [...] Post-punk or theatre of

cruelty?). ‘Teatro ou liturgia tribal do fim do milénio?’ (Theatre or end of millenium’s tribal liturgy?). ‘¿Es esto “teatro”?’ (Is it theatre?). ‘What the hell was that?’²⁶ The first question was answered by the critic: ‘no es teatro [...] Pero el teatro es otra cosa’ (It is not theatre [...] Theatre is another thing).²⁷

Other classifications and labels have been used to define the ensemble’s works throughout its trajectory. I select some of them: ‘il vero “teatro shock”’ (the real shock theatre); ‘demolition theatre’; ‘het Theater van de Angst’ (the theatre of fear); ‘Theater Spektakel’ (theatre spectacle); ‘el antiteatro posindustrial’ (the postindustrial anti-theatre); ‘ein Theater der Medien’ (media theatre); ‘teatro raro’ (singular theatre); ‘teatr totalny’ (total theatre); ‘teatro integral’ (integral theatre); ‘teatro irregolare’ (irregular theatre); ‘el teatre dels sentits’ (sensorial theatre); ‘a scape far from normal theatre’; ‘o teatro do futuro’ (the theatre of the future); ‘Radikaltheater’ (radical theatre), and ‘antiteatro’ (anti-theatre).²⁸

Some labels were repeated by different authors in distinct countries; such as ‘total theatre’, ‘teatro punk’, ‘o novo “Teatro da Crueldade”’ (the new ‘Theatre of Cruelty’), or ‘teatro de los ‘90, teatro vanguardista, teatro posmoderno’ (1990s’ theatre, vanguard

²⁶ The questions were taken respectively from José Martínez, ‘La Fura dels Baus’, *La Nueva España*, Oviedo, 14 August 1994, p. 38; Ugo Volli, ‘Violenza post-punk made in Catalogna’, *La Repubblica*, Rome/Milan, 30 November 1985, p. 28; Manuel João Gomes, ‘Vivir, morir, comer y follar’, *Público*, Lisbon, 27 November 1996, p. 34; Joaquín Aranda, ‘Infernal’, *Heraldo de Aragón*, Zaragoza, 25 June 1997, p. 36; and Colin Donald, ‘MTM’, *Scotsman*, Glasgow, 9 May 1996, p. 27.

²⁷ Martínez, p. 38.

²⁸ Quoted respectively from Andrea Marcheselli, ‘Fura dels Baus: ecco il vedro “teatro shock”’, *Il Giornale*, Modena, 1 December 1985, p. 26; James Hughes-Onslow, ‘Underwater chaos for art’s sake’, *London Standard*, 11 August 1986, p. 5; Roland Vonk, ‘Het Theater van de Angst’, *Het Vrije Volk*, Amsterdam, 2 July 1987, p. 17; Von Christoph Kuhn, ‘Aus dem poetischen Innenraum zu Terror und Krieg’, *Tages-Anzeiger*, Zurich, 27 August 1988, p. 20; Matias Garay, ‘El “antiteatro” posindustrial de La Fura dels Baus llega a Euskadi’, *Gaceta Norte*, Bilbao, 8 March 1987, p. 45; Wolfgang Kralicek, ‘Katastrophe liebe chaos’, *Theater Heute*, Vienna, (July 1994), p. 49; Beatriz Jiménez, ‘Rayos y destellos en la noche’, *La Voz del Tajo*, Toledo, 29 April 1990, p. 5; Raman Pawlowski, Redacción, ‘Teatro integral’, *Clarín*, 28 July 1995, p. 12; Paolo Ferrari, ‘La Fura dels Baus’, *La Stampa*, Torino, 12 April 1996, p. 16; Josep M. Peña, ‘El teatre dels sentits’, *Nou Diari*, Tarragona, 25 August 1996, pp. 3-8, p. 3; Per Theil, ‘Den usynlige grænse’, *Det Fri Aktuelt*, Copenhagen, 24 April 1993, p. 19, trans. by Stella Staveland; Olga Teixeira, ‘“Manes”, ou o teatro do futuro’, *A Capital*, Lisbon, 15 June 1997, p. 18; Marion Hirte, ‘La Fura dels Baus Radikaltheater’, *Prinz*, Berlin, 10 September 1992, p. 22; Lorenzo López Sancho, ‘“Noun”, o el caos según La Fura dels Baus’, *ABC*, Madrid, 8 May 1992, p. 113.

theatre, postmodern theatre).²⁹ Mercè Saumell recollected other classifications associated with La Fura within the wide scale of diversity that permeated theatre in the '80s, deriving from the conceptual scope achieved during the '70s: 'Theatre/Action, Post-Avant-garde or the Theatre of Catastrophe' (1996, 108).

The ensemble's productions would amplify the uncertainty not only about La Fura's theatrical insertion but even about its artistic medium or discipline. Here are some examples: '¿Son un grupo musical? ¿Son un grupo de teatro?' (Are they a musical band? Are they a theatre company?); 'Spaniens radikale Theatre-Poesie' (Spanish radical theatre-poetry); 'è la "new wave" della prosa' (the new wave prose); 'over-the-top Spanish hard rock band'; 'concerto teatral' (theatrical concert); 'son herederos inconscientes del dadaísmo' (they are unconscious Dadaist heirs); 'són mims i acrobates, amb tot el respecte' (they are mime artists and acrobats); 'theirs is street theatre taken to extremes'; 'confluencia maxima entre el teatro y las artes plásticas, el trabajo del grupo catalán está ligado indisolublemente a la evolución de las artes plásticas' (maximum convergence between theatre and fine arts, the Catalan group's work is concretely linked to the evolution of the fine arts); 'La Fura no es teatro ni ballet' (La Fura is not theatre nor ballet); 'grupo de danza catalán' (Catalan dance group); 'punk circus', and even "'Industrial Buto'" (Francesch 1988, 18) or 'els seus espectacles semblen un mena d'òperes del futur' (their spectacles seem a sort of opera of the future).³⁰

²⁹ 'Teatr totalny', *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Poznan, Poland, 3 July 1995, p. 10; Patricia Gabancho, 'Teatro punk con La Fura dels Baus', *El Noticero Universal*, Barcelona, 2 May 1984, p. 26; unsigned, 'LaFura dels Baus, o novo "Teatro da Crueldade"', *LP*, Lisbon, 1 December 1988, pp.20-1, Jesus R. Fernandez, 'La Fura dels Baus: "Estamos inventando un lenguaje"', *Ya*, 27 July 1986, pp. 24-5.

³⁰ Quoted respectively from Manuel Llanes and Arantza Furundarena, 'untitled', *El Diario Vasco*, San Sebastián, 26 April 1992, p. 99; Frido Hütter, 'Fleischfresser/Krieger', *Kleine Zeitung*, 2 June 1990, p. 45; Anna Adriani, 'Il teatro spagnolo con un pó di follia', *La Repubblica*, 28 November 1985, p. 20; unsigned, 'untitled', *Standard*, London, 4 November 1985, p. 17; Sergio Roveri e Alberto Gusik, 'Sujos, molhados e totalmente fascinados pela Fura dels Baus', *Folha da Tarde*, São Paulo, 5/10/91, p. 18; Patricia Cardona, 'Los canallas del butoh', *Uno más uno*, Mexico City, 4 May 1987, p. 2; Emili Teixidor, 'L'aparador cultural', *Diari de Barcelona*, 1 March 1988, p. 10; Lucy O'Brien, 'La Fura dels Baus: Suz/o/Suz', *New Musical Express*, 23 August 1986, p. 42; Roberto Guevara, 'Más allá del teatro, la plástica', *El Nacional*, Caracas 5 April 1988, p. 3; Meir Porush, in unsigned, 'La Fura dels Baus enfurece a los ortodoxos judíos', *EFE*, 22 May 1993, p. 52; V. R., 'Teatro de fricción de Fura dels Baus en Chile',

In addition to Artaud, punk and aggressive, performance art may be pointed to as the most common reference to define the company's productions. Kenneth Rea defined them as a 'performance art group'. His colleague agreed that La Fura's shows were an 'exhibition of performance art. [...] An orgy of stunning, sadistic visual images and barbaric noise'. Another critic inferred that the company was 'a troupe of Spanish anarchists [...] half an ordeal and half a game. [...] Perhaps it is closest to a more violent form of a Sixties happening'. 'A visceral approach to art' or 'controlled chaos' have also been used to outline them. And other one concluded that 'they may well inspire a new generation of drama and performance art'.³¹

The explanations have trespassed the usual artistic limits. Connecting the group to Spanish and Catalan *fiestas* and popular traditions, it was defined as 'la fiesta de San Fermín del año 2000' or 'la Patum, en moderno'. Connected to ritual, the group has been considered 'a reenactment of the shamanic sceance [sic]' (Francesch 1987, 18). The impotence in defining La Fura's performativity would come to 'furor do teatro total ou o que cada um entender' (total theatre's fury or whatever each one understands), or even to 'La Fura é uma coisa' (La Fura is a thing).³²

This international labelling associated with La Fura's productions during the last fifteen years does not take in account one fifth of the cities visited by the group. These

La Época, Santiago, 8 May 1997, p. 14; Sarah Thomas, 'A festival nightmare', *Advertiser*, Adelaide, 13 January 1996, p. 29, and unsigned, 'www.lafura.com', *Teatre BCN*, 5, (February 2000), p. 50.

³¹ Quoted respectively from Kenneth Rea, 'La Fura dels Baus', *Guardian*, 25 November 1984, p.23; John Peter, 'The mind stays in hiding', *Sunday Times*, 24 November 1985, p. 26; May Harron, 'Meeting the mud people', *Observer*, 1 December 1985, p. 32; unsigned, 'La Fura dels Baus', *Buenos Aires Herald*, 19 July 1996, p. 11; Bryce Hallett, 'Spanish sewer rats dish the dirt on power structures', *Australian*, Adelaide, 14 March 1996, p. 3; and Philip Hoare, 'The vermin return', *LAM*, London, 12 August 1986, 375, p. 31.

³²The first quote is from Paolo Zunino, 'La Fiesta de San Fermín del año 2000', *La Nación*, 21 July 1996, p. 1. The San Fermín *fiestas* are realised in Pamplona in July. Its most famous characteristic is the *encierro* or running of bulls through the streets amongst the participants at the event. The allusion to Berga's Patum was made by Maria Aurèlia Capmany, in Burguet i Ardiaca, 'Salvajes posindustriales y cordero crudo', *El País*, 23 January 1986, p. 24. *La Patum* is realised for Corpus Christi in Berga, Catalonia and it is one of the most famous Catalan *festes*. See Farràs (1986). The last quotations are from Filinto Pereira de Melo, 'La Fura, o furor do teatro total ou o que cada um entender', *Primeiro de Janeiro*, Oporto, 13 June 1997, p. 15; and Nelson de Sá, 'Fura dels Baus mostra "teatro total" em São Paulo', *Folha de São Paulo*, 15 September 1991, p. 5.

reviews indicate both a clear international response and a persistent reductiveness in reviewing theatre. Ignoring previous studies on and practices of this continuously changing art, the reviews question the theatrical insertion of La Fura: they indicate again both a denial of a theatrical language and its multiple potentialities and possibilities and an oversight of interdisciplinarity in the contemporary arts.

Some critics have pointed out that international practice has obviously not incurred the same mistake. Mason acknowledges the big impact of La Fura and Comediants on contemporary theatre practice and their influence over a 'wave of groups like Malabar, Generik Vapeur and Archaos' (1992, 24). David George and John London point out that 'groups such as Els Joglars, Comediants and La Fura dels Baus [...] have come to represent Catalan theatre beyond Catalonia' (1996, 15). Saumell refers to La Fura as 'the most significant Catalan representative of this kind of new theatre' (1996, 118). The Argentinean theatre company De La Guarda was regarded as the international star of the London International Festival of Theatre in 1997, returning in 1999 as one of the box office successes of the year. This is recalled here for both this Buenos Aires based group and critics acknowledge its theatrical work as 'heavily influenced by La Fura dels Baus' (Edwards 1997, 16).

Scant international academic attention has been given to La Fura (Cohen 1989; Read 1992; Birringer 1996; Fischer-Lichte 1997). The references to them in these texts are brief, functioning as one of a number of significant examples of world postmodern theatre, physical theatre or performance art.³³ There are longer exceptions in English (an interview of Morte with Francesch 1987; Goldberg 1988, 1998; Mason 1992; Saumell's articles in George and London 1996 and in Delgado 1998; an interview of Antúnez with Giannetti 1998, and Feldman 1998, 1999).³⁴ Nevertheless, English publications or

³³ Cohen, Mason and Fischer-Lichte re-baptise the group as *La Fúria* dels Baus.

³⁴ There are graduation studies of La Fura undertaken in Holland, Italy and Germany but the first PhD thesis that approaches La Fura as part of the main object of study is the one finished in October 2000 by

overviews on contemporary Spanish theatre may still mention La Fura quite curtly (Halsey and Zatlin 1999), or not at all (Halsey and Zatlin 1988).

In Catalan and Castilian, the situation is not dissimilar. Lufza Borrás (1986) Teresa Camps (1988) and Glòria Picazo (1988) included the group in their studies of Performance Art in Catalonia. Francesc Cerezo's article in *Estudis Escènics* in 1986 was the first detailed work on La Fura's theatre. Significant publications on contemporary European, Spanish and Catalan theatre have failed to mention the group (Berenguer 1983; Cabal and Santos 1985; Oliva 1989; 1992). 1988 saw a change when *El Público* published a special edition of its *Cuadernos Monográficos* on La Fura and this has been followed by other important studies (Abellán, and Benach in *Escenarios* 1988; Ardiaca 1990; Sánchez 1994; Ragué-Arias 1996).³⁵ Nevertheless, the only published book on La Fura is still Albert de la Torre's *La Fura dels Baus* (1992). The book in Catalan has its merit as an exception in its recollection of the period 1979-90. However, it does not present an academic and systematised work on the aesthetic trajectory of the ensemble as does Saumell's unpublished study *Tres Dècades, Tres Grups: Treball de Teorització sobre Els Joglars, Comediants i La Fura dels Baus* (1990).³⁶ Saumell's work on La Fura has been a critical exception even amongst Spanish critics.

If this balance shows that La Fura's works have not received the equivalent critical attention by academics as that given by journalists, theatre artists and spectators, we should not perhaps be surprised that a study on the artistic interdisciplinarity in their works does not yet exist. Artistic interdisciplinarity in theatre has so far received little critical attention. Nevertheless, both the existence of a manifest presence of

Saumell on *Grups Catalans de Teatre Contemporani (1962-1992)* (Universitat de Barcelona). Saumell's emphasis is on Els Joglars, Els Comediants and La Fura.

³⁵ Abellán and Benach approach briefly the group in their articles about Catalan theatre in *Escenarios* (1988). Burguet i Ardiaca (1990) published interview with the group. Sánchez (1999) comments on La Fura. Ragué-Arias does the same in her 1990-91 article in *Euromaske* but elaborates the mention further in her *El Teatro de Fin de Milenio en España* (1996).

³⁶ Although this research won an award at the Institut del Teatre, it has not yet been published.

interdisciplinarity in theatre and La Fura's conspicuous international profile highlight this critical discrepancy. Both subjects have been relegated to a second place behind works on dramaturgical, written theatre. This study aims at inserting itself against this equivocal absence. The remainder of this introduction discloses the methodology applied in this enterprise.

The Method of Approach

Thomas Postlewait draws attention to the fact that when 'we read a historical report or book [...] we are reading readings that are readings of readings of the event' (1991, 177). Mariza Veloso and Angélica Madeira point out that an analyses of these readings may also be equivalent to its object, also compounding a reading or a reading of readings, instead of a scientific discourse (1999, 13).

This is not a historical thesis and it is not an exhaustive survey of La Fura or artistic interdisciplinarity. It is not the history of 1980s theatre or of this work's objects of study. Nor I have not attempted to answer the question 'What is *the* contemporaneous theatre at the end of the twentieth century?' I have focused on one subject, artistic interdisciplinarity in theatre, and one group, La Fura dels Baus. This double focus may attest to some of the penultimate transformations of theatrical language. 'Penultimate' is employed to express the acknowledgement that other transformations are already happening within the art of theatre as time proceeds.

This thesis is deliberately eclectic in its theoretical framework and methodological approach. There is no theory that is followed as a dogma. Both the introduction and the main body of this thesis draws on a variety of opinions discourses of artists, theorists and critics, of different disciplines, nationalities and ages to nurture this reading of La Fura's artistically interdisciplinary theatre. This study attempts to establish a dialogue

with them in order to discuss the position of artistic interdisciplinarity and the Barcelona-based group within contemporaneous theatres.

As posited by John London, this study ‘does not claim to provide all the answers to interpretation – as some Marxists and positivists do – or pessimistically assert that there are none, or an unmanageable plethora, in the way of radical post-structuralists’ (1997, 22). This introduction outlines a cross-disciplinary engagement with relevant aspects of cultural and social theory that will proceed throughout the research. I have drawn on different disciplines engaged in postmodern debates such as philosophy and anthropology to delimit a theoretical framework to this enterprise. Other broad areas of knowledge employed in this investigation are interdisciplinarity, Catalan and Spanish history, performance art and artistic discourses and practices which have been used to elucidate the implications of artistic interdisciplinarity in La Fura’s theatre.

Chapter 1 of this thesis deals with the concept of interdisciplinarity itself. Whilst the first section scans contemporaneous interdisciplinarity in the 1990s, the second section attempts to define interdisciplinarity and artistic interdisciplinarity. This macro analysis of interdisciplinarity is succeeded by a search of its micro-instances throughout the thesis, gradually focusing on the features of the *lenguaje furero* and its artistically interdisciplinary exchanges. This strategy aims to share an understanding of how this artistic interdisciplinarity may be manifested in theatre.

Chapter 2 looks at some artistically interdisciplinary instances before and after modernism in the arts. The first section examines the ancient Indian treatise *Natya-Sastra* as a pre-modern, theoretical defence of artistic interdisciplinarity in theatre in contrast to Aristotle’s *Poetics*. The second section investigates artistic interdisciplinarity within the vanguards of the second half of the twentieth century,³⁷ exploring the debates

³⁷ The understanding of ‘vanguard’ that I bear in mind is summarised by Veloso and Madeira: a group which promotes a defamiliarisation of rules and assumes a distant attitude to the current codes of aesthetic creation, politics and all domains of the culture (1999, 138).

around postmodernism and modernism in the arts. These debates may provide a perspective to follow the trajectory from performance art to performance, pointed to previously by Herbert Blau (1992) and RoseLee Goldberg (1998).³⁸

Chapter 3 elaborates further the Catalan/Castilian axis in the hope of preparing the siting of La Fura's productions. The first section examines the emergence of Catalanism within a historical context which acknowledges the tension between Catalonia and Spain during the Franco era. The second section looks at the *Teatro Independiente* as a ground for the alterations within theatrical language in both Catalonia and Spain as a means of filtering the movement's possible influence on La Fura's aesthetics. The final section deals with the democratic transition in Spain, siting La Fura's beginnings within this context of change in both Catalonia and the *Teatro Independiente*.

Chapter 4 attempts to trace the initial artistically interdisciplinary steps of La Fura within the company's first period (1979-83). The first section explores the early productions of the group within the nation-wide *desencanto* (1979-82). The second section investigates the creations of the nine man line up within the context of *la movida* and brings the company's history up to the performance of *Accions* (1983) in Sitges. Dealing with the Catalan, Spanish and *furero* histories and analyses, both chapters 3 and 4 take a more descriptive form. Chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6 anticipate some of the creative processes of the group within the examination of the company's site, history, influences and performance texts.

Chapter 5 begins by describing in some detail the productions which make up the first trilogy, and provides an exploration of what is habitually referred to as the *lenguaje furero*. The second section introduces an analysis of the performance texts devised by La Fura in the 1980s. In order to understand artistic interdisciplinarity and La Fura's theatre, neither the performance texts or games nor the four features of the *lenguaje*

³⁸ See pages 14 and 15 of this study.

furero can be considered separately. The methodological option of this thesis dealing with the unwritten theatre of La Fura is to select six scenic threads - space, time, sound, movement, body and image. Chapters 6, 7 and 8 examine these scenic threads' nexuses and articulated axes as well as the *lenguaje furero*'s features with reference to the first trilogy. In this manner, I attempt to organise this thesis' dismemberment of the ensemble's *punctum* and *rasa* in the hope of filtering the artistic interdisciplinarity in La Fura's first trilogy.

Chapter 6 deals with the *lenguaje furero*'s feature of having the creative works devised, directed and performed by the nine *fureros*. The first section displays the *fureros*' work with blurred boundaries between acting and performing which are crucial elements in the understanding of La Fura's performance texts and interdisciplinarity. The second section studies the axis image/body in the first trilogy. The third section explores the interdisciplinary exchanges of La Fura's theatre with performance art as a means of elaborating further the objectives of this chapter about the collective, creative processes and works of the company.

Chapter 7 continues this analysis of micro-instances of interdisciplinarity by investigating the time/space axis of the productions. The second section connects this axis to the scenic thread of sound as a means of exploring the artistic interdisciplinarity of La Fura's theatre with music.

Chapter 8 examines the *lenguaje furero*'s relational feature, or the coexistence of performers and spectators in the same performing area. While the first section presents this relational feature, the second section looks at possible connections between national site/identity and theatrical performance. The third section looks at the body/movement axis to pre-set the examination of the interdisciplinary exchanges between theatre and dance in La Fura's first trilogy.

After chapter 8, the final unit of this thesis presents my conclusions on artistic interdisciplinarity and La Fura's theatre. Each new chapter will begin by stating its specific objectives. The final section of each chapter is an 'afterwords' which connects the argument to issues to be discussed in the future chapters.

Veloso and Madeira paraphrase Walter Benjamin recalling that to know the past may be the beginning of a special experience to generate illuminations for present and future utopias (1999, 57). Margaret Wilkerson reminds us that 'we can no longer teach or even study [theatre] as we have in the past. [...] We will have to do more than clone ourselves, in order to prepare those who can go beyond our limitations' (1991, 239-41). And Marc Augé recalls that 'by not examining the present, we risk becoming inattentive to contemporary signifieds' (1999, 30). Accepting this context pointed out by these authors, this thesis attempts to accomplish a double aim within the period under analysis and through its objects of study. It seeks to stimulate further, and necessary, debates and actions in re-mapping theatrical language, and to connect these moves and ideas to an understanding of current signifieds of this art and its environments.

Artistic interdisciplinarity and La Fura may be tools or 'tool boxes' to talk about, defy, read, analyse and create theatre. As pointed out by Brian Mazzumi in this foreword to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*:

Deleuze's own image for a concept is not a brick, but a 'tool box'. He calls this kind of philosophy 'pragmatics' because its goal is the invention of concepts that do not add up to a system of belief or an architecture of propositions that you either enter or you don't, but instead pack a potential in the way a crowbar in a willing hand envelops an energy of prying (1988, xv).

Both main objectives of this thesis question discrepancies and obstacles against the freedom that the theatrical performativity has achieved and may consciously exercise in a space occupied by people who behold and/or share the expressive dimension of the strategic articulation of a theatrical artist or group of creators. According to Mazzumi, the question should not be 'is it true? But: does it work? What new thoughts does it

make it possible to think? What new emotions does it make it possible to feel?' (1988, xv). The following chapters attempt to explore these and other questions, examining the artistic interdisciplinarity in La Fura dels Baus' theatre from 1979 to 1989.

CHAPTER 1

ARTISTIC INTERDISCIPLINARITY

Introduction

Chapter 1 elaborates further one of the main conceptual instruments for this study: 'artistic interdisciplinarity'. The first section examines postmodern contemporaneity to scan interdisciplinary operations within the late twentieth century. This section also deals with definitional problems of the term 'interdisciplinarity' within its multiple applications in diverse arts and sciences. Without interrupting this discussion, the second section turns its focus to the interdisciplinary phenomena within the arts to investigate different levels of interdisciplinarity such as multidisciplinary, pluridisciplinary and cross-disciplinary. Both sections seek to explore the discussion of disciplinary and interdisciplinarity in theatre.

1.1. Contemporaneous Interdisciplinarity

Within the postmodern interplays of particularisms and universalism, global and local and self and other, different levels of interdisciplinarity and specialisation do not seem to exclude but to constitute each other. This study does not opt for one side of a specialisation/interdisciplinarity binarism: the supposed dichotomy between specialisation and interdisciplinarity, as with other binarisms, obscures the whole set of subtle interplays present in the potentials of disciplines. The choice of investigating theatre through the exchanges of this artistic language with other arts attempts a trade between specialisation and interdisciplinarity, as happens in theatre practice. This study aligns with what George Gusdorf claims as an epistemology of convergence, or

interdisciplinarity, substituting disconnected disciplines sharing similar efforts (1976, 26). However, this thesis circulates amongst different disciplines to research artistically interdisciplinary operations without forgetting its focus on theatre.

Technological advances, contemporaneous paradoxes, minorities and plural performativities provoke general transformations which trigger other theories to accompany these changing times. As an example of these transformations, the patriarchal form is no longer the rule nor dominating model for families. In the same vein, national identity mutates into plural identities within globalisation. Within this globalised contemporaneity of the late twentieth century, it may be observed that definitions of self and nationhood and definitions of performance aesthetics may converge at the end of the twentieth century. Within this convergence, Catalonia discloses a specific set of mutations (Keating 1995, Castells 1997, Guibernau and Rex 1997). Thus, interdisciplinarity and La Fura is as much about styles of playing as about modes of being in the Catalan nation, and by extension, in the Spanish State.¹

The State has had to adapt itself within the global nets of capitals' free circulation. Global problems demand new global studies and solutions. Manuel Castells points out in an interview to Margarita Rivière that

technological changes require a level of consciousness and social and personal responsibility that we currently do not have. [...] States, for instance, are engaged rather in surviving than in orientating the global fluxes for their citizens. The State is simultaneously part of the solution and the problem. We have to find other tools within the civil society to avoid inequalities and crisis (2000, 12).²

Citizens have been proposing and searching for new tools to re-read sexualities, races, identities, and worlds. Seeking to find interdisciplinarity in our contemporary everyday,

¹ I thank my supervisor Paul Heritage for this valuable construction on 'styles of playing and modes of being', in one of our feedback conversations.

² 'Los cambios tecnológicos requieren un nivel de conciencia y responsabilidad social y personal que hoy no tenemos. [...] Los Estados, por ejemplo, están ocupados más en sobrevivir que en orientar los flujos globales en beneficio de los ciudadanos. El Estado es, a la vez, parte de la solución y del problema. Tenemos que encontrar otros instrumentos en la sociedad civil para evitar desigualdades y crisis [...]'

terms like ‘modern primitives’, ‘bi-curious’, ‘Cablinisian’ and ‘Spanglish’ should not be discarded as popular dilettantism or futile slang, but examined. Slang may comprise much of a popular knowledge dealing with the need for other concepts for changing performativities. These terms also indicate revisions of disciplinary limits within the studies of our contemporaneity’s practices.

‘Modern primitives’ joins two terms traditionally held apart as antonyms. The term is considered to have been coined by Fakir Musafar, Bud ‘Viking’ Navarro and Zapata in Los Angeles in 1967. In a published interview with V. Vale and Andrea Juno, Musafar explains the use of modern primitive to describe ‘a non-tribal person who responds to primal urges and does something with the body’ (1988, 13). For Margaret Kaye, the term ‘refers to people who pierce, tattoo, brand, scarify or otherwise alter their bodies for reasons of religion, history, fashion, fadism, thrill-seeking, punk or funk. Such markings are particularly favored by the youthful post-punk crowd’ (1996, 16). Musafar states to Kaye that ‘in this culture we have not provided rites of passage, so youth invents some rather destructive ones. They steal a car, or smoke some dope, or do some other stupid thing’ (1996, 16-17). Musafar points out, however, that ‘the whole purpose of “modern primitive” practices is to get more and more spontaneous in the expression of *pleasure with insight*’ (1988, 13).

He also recalls to Juno and Vale that ‘body builders are a modern-day *accepted* manifestation of body modification’ (1988, 14). Nevertheless, the term has been used most frequently to describe the increasing trend for piercing and tattoos not only amongst young people. Musafar argues to Kaye that he ‘never thought it [the modern primitive practices] could reach out this way. [...] It’s really been a surprise – a delightful surprise’ (1996, 16). The habits of this practice also imply one of multiple

manipulation or differentiation of a personal selfhood or identities which challenge binarisms.³

'Bi-curious' has turned into 1990s' jargon which describes an interest in exploring one's sexual identity with both men and women. There is no urge in defining this practice as a gay, lesbian or bi-sexual option. It questions the supposed impossibility of mutual penetrability and envelopes rich, changing, sexual and identitary diversities. Cyber space provides other transformations and manifestations of bi-sexualities or otherwise.⁴

Scientists from North-American National Health Institutes have recently declared in September 2000 that 'there is only one race, the human race.'⁵ The scientists estimate that 99% of human genes are the same in any person: from the 1% remaining, only 10% may present variations related to physical appearance. J. Craig Venter, Celera Genomics Corporation's director unqualified race as a scientific concept, pointing out that 'all of us evolved in the last 100,000 years from the same reduced number of tribes which emigrated from Africa and colonised the world.'⁶ Nevertheless, it does not mean that the cultural concepts of race have stopped multiplying.

In a broadcast interview to Oprah Winfrey in April 1997, Tiger Woods defined his racial identity as 'Cablinasian' (Caucasian, black, Indian and Asian). According to Gary Kamiya,

Woods made his remarks on 'Oprah' when he was asked if it bothered him to be called an African-American. 'It does' he said. 'Growing up, I came up with this name: I'm a "Cablinasian."' As in Caucasian-black-Indian-Asian. Woods has a black father (or to be precise, if I am interpreting Woods' reported ancestry

³ For a brief introduction on Musafar and modern primitives see Margaret Kaye (1996). Vale and Juno (1988) published the results of conversations with Musafar from 1982 to 1986 in a special edition of *Re/Search* (1988) devoted to modern primitivism. This edition is a valuable overview of modern primitive practices and agents. Musfar edits a magazine, *Modern Primitives*, which is sold at Tower Records.

⁴ See Girão and Fitzgerald (1997) for an introduction on sexualities and the Internet.

⁵ See Natalie Angier, 'La genética descalifica el concepto de raza', *El País*, 13 September 2000, p. 34.

⁶ 'La raza es un concepto social, no científico. [...] Todos evolucionamos em los últimos 100.000 años a partir del mismo grupo reducido de tribos que emigraron desde África y colonizaron el mundo.' In Angier, p. 34.

correctly, a half-black, one-quarter American Indian, one-quarter white father) and a Thai mother (or, with the same caveat, a half-Thai, half-Chinese mother). 'I'm just who I am,' Woods told Oprah Winfrey, 'whoever you see in front of you' (1997, 2).⁷

Woods' 'Cablinasian' provoked complaints from black movements, concerned with the possibility of a 'dropping out' predicament within their causes for equality and against racism. Kamiya cites many reactions like that of 'light-skinned [sic] Colin Powell, responding to Woods' comments, "In America, which I love from the depth of my heart and soul, when you look like me, you're black"' (1997, 2). Nevertheless, Woods stressed an interracial identity not contemplated by existent categories. His controversial new category and statement was an 'evidence that the old categories – black, white, Asian and Pacific Islander, native American and "other" – are inadequate', as articulated by Kamiya (1997, 2-3). He also said that after Woods' statement, North-American congress was 'considering a multiracial category to the 2000 census' (1997, 2 of 7). Kamiya emphasises that the refusal of Woods 'to be pigeonholed into a single racial category points the way out of the dualistic rigidity and emotional hysteria that has led America into a racial impasse' (1997, 3).

The term 'Spanglish' was coined in the United States in the mid-1960s to describe an emerging dialect created by Spaniards, Latin and North Americans. Spanglish has several websites on the Internet, including a first dictionary and a first e-zine.⁸ In a special double issue of *Newsweek* about 'Your life in the 21st century', Ellis Cose states that 'latinos [sic] may consider themselves white, black, American Indian, Asian or Pacific islanders – or deem themselves none of the above' (1999/2000, 38-40). He also argues that 'between 1960 and 1992, the number of interracially married couples [in

⁷ See Kamiya's article, 'cablinasian like me' at <http://www.salonmag.com/april197/tiger970430html> for a valuable analysis of the discussion provoked by Woods and the position of new categories.

⁸ The <http://www.paisvirtual.com/ciencia/spanglish> provides an introduction on Spanglish. Whilst the first Spanglish dictionary can be found in the http://www.members.tripod.com/nelson_g/Spanglish.html, the first e-zine is in <http://www.guau.com>.

the USA] multiplied more than seven times over', suggesting that 'we have no idea what "majority race" will mean a half century from now' (2000, 40): this seems equally applicable to other parts of the world.

These selected terms demand epistemological bridges between disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, the arts, psychology, history and linguistics which may consider the subjects raised by 'modern primitives', 'bi-curious', 'Cablinasian' or 'Spanglish'. Within the 1990s, new information technology assumed a prominent importance for/within the progress of all different disciplines. Each one of these can not dispense with this necessary interconnection beyond the equally sought after specialisation of each specific field. The global simultaneity of references and realities confuses disciplinary strategies further. In a published interview in 2000, Jesús Mosterín protests against 'the scientific specialist that knows each time more about less and at the end knows almost everything about nothing. This results in the sciences giving us a fragmented vision of the world.'⁹ The authoritative apprehensions of distinct totalities are deconstructed, undone and refused (Clifford 1988; Castells 1997; Augé 1999).

These critics assume their partiality in approaching such a complex issue. They stress the need for parallel, extra-disciplinary support. They distrust categorisations and share uncertainty. Nevertheless, for Castells, 'without doubt, education will have to be redesigned, which is the most important inversion of our time, and must graduate masters and teachers through pluridisciplinary projects' (2000, 14).¹⁰

⁹ 'Y llegamos al especialista científico que sabe cada vez más sobre cada vez menos y al final lo sabe casi todo sobre casi nada. Esto hace que la ciencia nos dé una visión fragmentada del mundo.' See Francesc Arroyo, 'La matemática está a medio camino entre el arte y la ciencia', *El País*, Babelia, 18 March 2000, p. 12.

¹⁰ 'Sin duda habrá que rediseñar toda la educación, que es la inversión más importante de nuestro tiempo, formando maestros y profesores con proyectos pluridisciplinarios.'

Projects framed by interdisciplinarity have arrived at significant levels of applicability. In a published interview in 1999, Philip Griffiths recalls that ‘the discovery of the characteristics of both the AIDS’ virus and the current treatments’ medicaments happened through two mathematicians and one medical doctor [respectively Allan Pearlson and Martin Novak, and David Ho].’¹¹ In a published interview in 2000, Jean-Marie Lehn points out that nanotechnology and supramolecular chemistry have created a new discipline, the engineering of the solid crystalline, which might provide new materials for the pharmaceuticals and petrol industries, electronics and optics.¹²

Victor Turner has pointed out that ‘there are signs today that the amputated specialized genres are seeking to rejoin and to recover something of the numinosity lost in their sparagmos, their dismemberment’ (1990, 14). Griffiths also points out in the previously mentioned interview that ‘human behaviour is not reducible to mathematics’.¹³ Both Griffiths and Turner are neither reducing nor enthroning anthropology or mathematics in a ranking of isolated fields or closed specialisations. These critics suggest the impossibility of one single discipline’s domination over such complex and vast phenomenon such as human behaviour. Therefore, they open their specialisation and disciplines to exchange data and methods towards a mutual objective.

The arts have been confronting this interdisciplinary challenge. Peter Bunnell sees Cindy Sherman’s work as fascinating but in artistic rather than photographic terms, having ‘no notion that [he] could engage her in a discourse about the nature of the medium [photography] through which she derives her expression’ (in Solomon-Godeau

¹¹ ‘El descubrimiento de las características del virus del SIDA, y de los fármacos actuales para combatirlo, es de dos matemáticos y un médico.’ See Mónica Salomone, ‘El comportamiento humano no es reducible a matemáticas’, *El País*, 14 June 2000, p. 46. Griffiths is one of the nine members of the International Mathematics Union’s directory.

¹² See Jean-Paul Dufour, ‘Jean-Marie Lehn, Premio Nobel de Química: “Nos inspiramos en organismos vivos”’, *El País*, 31 May 2000, p. 43.

¹³ See Salomone, p. 46.

1984, 79). Sherman uses photography in order to retrieve, amplify and turn into a materiality her artistic expression and communication, working in a boundless territory that connects lights, make-up, costumes and scenery design, stills, story-telling, narrative, enactment, installation, and painting. Applying her intermedia experience to the cinema (*Office Killer*, 1997), Sherman is one of the several artists of different ages and nationalities who share the achievement of an artistic interdisciplinarity.

Susanne K. Langer assumes that ‘several arts may be distinguished as well as connected’ (1953, 24). For her, ‘art is a perceptible form that expresses the nature of human feeling’ in an ‘objectification of subjective life, and so is every other work of art’ (1957, 6). Langer asks ‘if works of art are all alike in this fundamental respect, why have we several great domains of art, such as painting and music, poetry and dance? [...] How does dancing, for instance, differ from music or architecture or drama?’: she responds that dance ‘has relations with all of them. Yet it is none of them’ (1957, 9). For her, the distinction ‘lies in the stuff of which the virtual image, the expressive form, is made’ (1957, 10).¹⁴

Langer acknowledges the nexuses amongst the arts and respects the differences of each art. However, she stated in 1957 that ‘there are no happy marriages in art – only successful rapes’ (1957, 86). Langer seems to assume a strict observance to rules, contradicting the existent relationships, flirtations and engagements amongst all the arts suggested by her. Performance art has been complicating distinctions and it is also another great domain of art. Not unlike sciences, there are other art forms demanding new methods and instruments, searching for other means and forms.

Langer’s employment of the word ‘rape’ implies a negativity in approaching other

¹⁴ See chapter 6 of Langer (1957) entitled ‘Deceptive Analogies: Specious and Real Relationships among the Arts’. It is interesting to compare her view with Greenberg (1961) or Fried (1967) and Goldberg’s introduction to her recent work on live arts from the 1960s to the present (1998).

practices which displayed a hybridisation between differing arts. Marc Augé indicates a risk of mutilation in this interdisciplinary circulation that could reduce disciplines to micro-fields or micro-observation (1999, 1-3). He might seem to echo in a sense Langer's 'artistic rape'. Augé, nevertheless, acknowledges interdisciplinarity as both a necessary strategy and a positive, constitutive element of the history of disciplines.

In the dialogue of anthropology with history, for example, Augé argues that 'we need not, however, be concerned if we see a discipline as totalizing as history appropriating aspects of anthropology, and recomposing them within a rejuvenated disciplinary whole' (1999, 2). The dialogue with other arts is also constitutive of the history of theatre; the arts, history and anthropology are examples of disciplines which do not isolate themselves from an exchange of information and methods. In a similar way, theatre has been supported by New Historicism in retelling its own history and recomposing its disciplinary whole.¹⁵

The nexuses between theatre elements and either/or music, the plastic arts or dance have been motivating and rejuvenating all these arts. This statement does not imply that interdisciplinarity is an essential way of assimilating the world or creating art, nor that the way in which we interact as humans should characterise our discourses as naturally interdisciplinary. Rather, what is called attention to is that excessive or exclusive compartmentalisation does not seem to have answered the demands of artistic and scientific development before or within the postmodern condition, and even less within the expanding information society.

For Castells, the pluridisciplinary projects of a re-designed education might confront the fact that 'the situation is of confusion: we are old living the new' (2000,

¹⁵ On New Historicism see McConachie (1991). For complementary overviews of the methodological transformations in theatre history, see Wilkerson (1991) and Williams (1991).

12).¹⁶ This appears to demand what was conspicuously expressed by Moysés Nussenzveig opening a new session of the Academia Brasileira de Ciências (Brazilian Academy of Sciences). The physicist stated in his published speech that

it is said that, whilst the twentieth century should have been the century of physics, the next will be the century of biology. I do not think so: it will be the century of BioPhysicsChemistryMathematicComputerationalTechnoSociological. Nature ignores our prejudices and arbitrary cuts (2000, 9).¹⁷

'BioPhysicsChemistryMathematicComputerationalTechnoSociological' seems to be a pan-discipline or transdiscipline dreamed up by Jean Piaget. This pan-disciplinarity or ubiquitous reach of applicability in education and everyday life was imagined by Piaget to deal with a rhysomatic web which challenged all the arts and sciences, attempting to connect all of these. Within the new information society, Nussenzveig plays with a re-combination of disciplines to face a constant re-articulation of this web. The need for other conceptual instruments persists to interpret the changing paths that contemporaneity is going through in simultaneous, distinct and linked worlds.

These paths reverberate inside distinct disciplines and have been the subject of different critics (Deleuze and Gattari 1991; Goldberg 1998; Veloso and Madeira 1999). Different disciplines accentuate their constitutive processes of exchanges united by similar objectives in approaching their contemporaneous worlds. As posed by Mariza Veloso and Angélica Madeira, 'the generalisation and intensification of processes of exchange have turned into an undeniable landmark of/for reflection around contemporary culture' (1999, 196).¹⁸

¹⁶ 'La situación es de confusión. Somos viejos viviendo lo nuevo.'

¹⁷ 'Diz-se que, assim como o século XX teria sido o da física, o próximo será o da BiofísicaQuímica-MatemáticaComputacionalTecnoSociológica! A Natureza ignora nossos preconceitos e recortes arbitrários.'

¹⁸ 'A generalização e a intensificação dos processos de troca se torna assim um marco incontestável da reflexão sobre a cultura atual.' The authors are an example of this strategy: Madeira graduated in literary criticism and Veloso in anthropology. Both these professors at the Universidade de Brasília's Department of Sociology united their specialities to propose a reading of readings of Brazilian culture. See Veloso and Madeira (1999).

This overview of a general, interconnected, ever-changing panorama of the late 1990s' witnesses and shapes a succession of webs re-articulating rhizomas and frontiers. Class, genre, national, artistic and identitary boundaries are crossed, transformed and hybridised into new ones. 'Hybrid' is one of the terms which has been conspicuously used in different disciplines within the 1980s and 1990s.

The demand for the use of the term may bring further light to this contemporary panorama. Drawing on the *Oxford English Dictionary's* seventh volume (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), Mike Pearson finds in the definition of 'hybrid' - 'anything derived from heterogeneous sources, or composed of different or incongruous elements' - a pejorative sense enlarged by terms such as 'half-breed, cross-breed and mongrel. For the hybrid is often viewed as infertile, as an aberrant combination of biological incompatibilities, as a sterile "one-off"' ([1989, 523] 1996, 5). Nevertheless, comparing this definition to the *New Encyclopaedia Britannica's* (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1993), Pearson finds another perspective:

the process of hybridization is important biologically because it increases the genetic variety (number of different gene combinations) within a species, which is necessary for evolution to occur. If climatic or habitat conditions change, individuals with certain combinations may be eliminated, but others with different combinations will survive. In this way, the appearance or behaviour of a species gradually may be altered ([1993, 183] 1996, 5).

Hybridism in arts does not mean an elimination of artistic species or languages, but a possible renovation and creation of others. Bert O. States employs Thomas Kuhn's studies on scientific paradigms to disclose that 'the difference between art paradigms and scientific paradigms is that art rarely discards any previous achievement. We do not discard naturalism as we discard the concept of a Ptolemaic universe and replace it with the "correct" Copernican view' (1985, 88). This possibility of discarding concepts is a practice of scientific closed systems within which rupture of paradigms occurs to

characterise a new concept.¹⁹ Arts are also concepts in ever-changing transformations. However, as recalled by States, ‘naturalism does not become invalid; it simply leads to something else and then it quietly absorbs that something else into its own practice’ (1985, 88-9).

Pearson draws on the definitions of hybrid to outline his work, within which three hybrids overlap and inform his theatre practice: “‘Me [English] in Wales” is the first hybrid.[...] “Welsh culture” is the second hybrid. [...] “Welsh theatre” is the third hybrid’ (1996, 5). Therefore, he uses the word hybrid

to signal a mutual attraction of ‘like’ and ‘unlike’, an interpenetration of sources whilst preserving their inherent characteristics and an accrual of the strengths which spring from evolutionary dynamism and diversification. Such hybrids may emerge in response to changing conditions - economic, political, ideological, aesthetic – and serve to question the continued existence of particular social and cultural orthodoxies and authenticities (1996, 5).

Pearson shows the concept of hybrid composing and being changed by a web which interpenetrates and is questioned by his work.

Sarah Radcliff and Sallie Westwood state that globalisation ‘has meant the emergence of often dynamic and innovative hybrid cultural forms and elements for identity constructions [....] Such hybridization of cultural forms and bases for identity [...] is widespread’ (1996, 23-4). Either/all the terms ‘hybrids’, ‘web’, ‘pluridisciplinary’, ‘global/local’, ‘supermodernity’, ‘postmodernism’, ‘*mestizaje*’, ‘mixed media’, ‘multimedia’, ‘intermedia’, ‘fusion’, ‘cross-over’ or/and ‘network’ indicate exchanges amongst different disciplines, identities and performativities. This diversity of exchanges between different disciplines that alter or create other disciplines seems to sum up interdisciplinarity. Within all the terms previously mentioned, interdisciplinarity appears as a common denominator. To be a common denominator within the confusing, contemporaneous diversification, attests to the pivotal presence

¹⁹ See Kuhn (1970).

and influence of interdisciplinarity within contemporary debates. This presence shapes and is shaped by artistic interdisciplinarity.

Roberto A. Follari recalls the emergence of interdisciplinarity as a reaction of capitalism facing its own problems of legitimisation, and as part of its strategies of expansion (1995, 129).²⁰ It is known that Fredric Jameson points to postmodernism as the cultural logic of late capitalism; for him, culture may be one of the most important ‘clues for tracking postmodernism: an immense dilation of its sphere (the sphere of commodities), an immense and historically original acculturation of the Real, a quantum leap in what Benjamin still called the “aestheticization” of reality (1991, x). Jameson states that “culture” has become a product in its own right; the market has become a substitute for itself... Postmodernism is the consumption of sheer commodification as a process’ (1991, x). Through his examination of these processes, Jameson summarises that

the formalism of the profit is then transmitted [...] to a kind of external *nouveau riche* public, which, from the age of the ‘organization men’ of the 1950s to that of 1980s ‘yuppies’, has grown ever less shameless in its pursuit of success, now reconceptualized as the ‘life style’ of a specific ‘group’ (1991, 352).

He acknowledges feminism and different groups assuming social priorities and re-ordering traditions of identity understandings in a pluralism which ‘is thus the ideology of groups, a set of phantasmic representations that triangulate three fundamental pseudoconcepts: democracy, the media and the market’ (1991, 320). This again stresses interdependent fields being manipulated by different performativities. This cross-disciplinary pluralism has been enhanced within a postmodern set of phenomena which Jameson sums up:

the West thus has the impression that without much warning and unexpectedly it now confronts a range of genuine individual and collective subjects who were not there before, or not visible, or – using Kant’s great concept – were still *minor* and under tutelage (1991, 356).

²⁰ See Follari (1982) and Jameson (1991).

Therefore, the reflexivity to read our times and the acknowledgement of multiple contingencies, contrasts and subjectivities are further indications of the need for a balance between specialisation and interdisciplinarity.

In its amalgamation of specialisations, interdisciplinarity means the abandonment of the isolation of disciplines. Gaudêncio Frigotto reminds us that the investigation of a delimited object of research or a specific problem must be searched through the multiple determinations and historic mediation which constitute it (1995, 27). Frigotto also stresses his refusal of interdisciplinarity as the possibility of a grand unified theory, suggesting, instead, that interdisciplinarity might be grasped as an historical imperative need (1995, 26-31).

Both the multiple, rhizomatic determinations of an object of study and the historical mediations that compound this object indicate, nevertheless, a complexity. Whilst Frigotto identifies this complexity as a problem, Mosterín assumes that the advance of contemporary sciences is a difficult task; Mosterín, however, emphasises that this advance will not be reached through compartmentalised studies or isolated researches of distinct fields approaching similar problems.²¹ For both Frigotto and Mosterín, the interdisciplinary search amplifies the acknowledgement of the studied problem's complexity.

Within interdisciplinary projects, different fields which had approached the same complexity through their specific perspectives and methods will present, contrast and cross their results and insights. Both the acknowledgement of the complexity and the dialogue of distinct fields may emphasise the recognition of the limits of both human

²¹ Mosterín calls attention to the irony that if Aristotle, Plato, Descartes or Kant were resurrected, any university would accept them; nevertheless, the academic boards would have problems in defining in which department(s) or faculty(ies) they would belong to. See Francesc Arroyo, "Jesús Mosterín 'La matemática está a medio camino entre el arte y la ciencia'", *El País*, 18 March 2000, p. 12. This irony is doubled by the fact that Aristotle was one of the first responsible for the necessary separation of knowledge into smaller units to improve its reach and self knowledge.

beings and epistemological certainties before that same complexity. These limits comprise a problem for both interdisciplinary and disciplinary enterprises. Nevertheless, the acknowledgement of both contemporaneous complexities and taxonomic limits is an initial move of interdisciplinary efforts towards other maps. It may then involve comparing and exchanging distinct discourses and practices to re-chart the interconnected realities and histories we are living through.

Acknowledged either as a need or a problem, interdisciplinarity is a neologism which is not understood or applied in a unique way. Hilton Japiassu mentions, however, that one point of agreement could be noticed through its different uses: the principle by which interdisciplinarity is characterised by the intensity of exchanges and various levels of interactions amongst disciplines (1976, 74). Different critics coincide in stating that at the end of the 1960s and during the 1970s,²² critical thinkers attempted to distinguish these various levels of usage and terminology of interdisciplinarity (Japiassu 1976, Fazenda 1991, Jacobs 1989, Orthoff 1994).

These critics attack an ignorance of basic presuppositions, a prejudice towards integration plus a lack of terminological precision, and propose distinctions amongst levels of interdisciplinarity (Fazenda 1991, 26-7). Their studies guide my attempt to provide definitions of the concepts related to interdisciplinarity and its manifestations amongst the arts. Bringing light onto interdisciplinarity itself, 'artistic interdisciplinarity' may also be elaborated further. A necessary examination of the concept of discipline begins the process of exploration.

²² One of those efforts was the report by the Centre pour la Recherche et l'Innovation dans l'Enseignement (Centre for the Education Research and Innovation) *CERI/HE/CP/69.01*. It was developed by British, French and German members of the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in Nice in 1969. In 1970, the *Seminaire sur la Pluridisciplinarité et l'Interdisciplinarité dans les Universités* (Pluridisciplinarity and Interdisciplinarity in Universities Seminar) was organised in Paris to extend the conclusions of the earlier CERI report. The result of discussions at the Seminar through the studies of Heinz Heickhausen, Guy Michaud, Jean Piaget, Eric Jantsch, Michel Boisot and André Lichnerowicz was published in *L'Interdisciplinarité: Problèmes d'Enseignement et de recherche dans les Universités* (Interdisciplinarity: Education and Research's Problems in the Universities, 1972).

1.2. Interdisciplinary Intensities

Drawing on Jean Piaget, Geraldo Ortoff defines disciplines as specific bodies of knowledge with their own procedures, methods and contents (1994, 3). Disciplines are constituted by the conjunct of objects that they consider, the theoretical or practical integration of the fundamentals and concepts involved, the instruments of analysis, the practical applicability, the subjects and the historic contingencies. It is important to recall that disciplines are also constituted by their exchanges with other disciplines.

In using the word 'disciplinarity', Hilton Japiassu stresses the specialised scientific use and the work and development of a specific homogeneous domain of study; a systematised and organised conjunct of knowledge which presents its own characteristics at the levels of teaching, formation, methodologies and subjects (1976, 72). 'Artistic disciplinarity' emphasises artistic operations at the plane of performing practice within the site of an artistic language and their multiple levels of creative and cognitive organisation and dissemination.

'Discipline', however, may be another draw back to the understanding of artistic interdisciplinarity. The meaning of 'discipline' may imply self-control, order kept, punishment or the setting of rules, habits of obedience and limits.²³ This is not the objective of this study in using the word 'discipline', as previously exposed; even though, these other meanings may promote the idea that an 'artistic discipline' might be considered restrictive or contradictory if compared to the anarchic function of the arts in simultaneously evading and expanding categorisation. However, artistic interdisciplinarity nurtures and enlarges the same anarchic function. These visions about discipline may be further observed or contradicted within discussions encompassing the arts, linguistics and sciences triggered by interdisciplinarity. The

²³ A. S. Hornby with A. P. Cowie and A C Gimson, *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary of Current English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 244-5.

examination of these discussions may aid this study in outlining further its understanding of both discipline and interdisciplinarity.

Marvin Carlson draws on Joseph Roach and Dwight Conquergood with respect to the disciplinarity or interdisciplinarity of performance. Both the latter theorists state that performance is an 'antidiscipline', for it should be understood as a response against formal disciplines or restrictive limitation (1996, 189). Johannes Birringer calls performance art 'a radically undisciplined art [creating] processes that cannot be easily contained by aesthetic or pedagogic theories that themselves depend on a disciplinary paradigm' (1996, 35).

Therese Grisham sees linguistics as an 'indiscipline' when transformed by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's pragmatics.²⁴ She argues that through their political analysis of language, they 'cross the boundaries of the discipline, not for the purposes of interdisciplinarity, but to go beyond the scope of disciplines altogether' (1991, 53).

'Chaos' frames the studies of different disciplines around the investigation of the laws and the irregular, discontinuous, erratic sides of nature. A chaotic disorder reorganises itself into ordered patterns and scientists try to find their way through this paradoxical panorama.²⁵ Mathematicians, physicists, biologists, chemists, astronomers, ecologists, physiologists, and economists began breaking their scattered actions around chaos in the middle 1970s pursuing connections between different kinds of irregularity. For James Gleick, 'a decade later, chaos has become a shorthand name for a fast-growing movement that is reshaping the fabric of the scientific establishment', which he sees as an interdiscipline (1987, 3-4).

²⁴ See Deleuze and Guattari (1991).

²⁵ For an introduction to chaos see Hofstadter (1985). For an overview, see Bai-Lin (1984) and Cvitanovic' (1984). However, Gleick (1987) is both a valuable introduction and overview of chaos in a more accessible language.

Gleick points out that ‘only a new kind of science could begin to cross the great gulf between knowledge of what one thing does – one water molecule, one cell of heart tissue, one neutron – and what millions of them do’ (1987, 8).²⁶ Whilst he points out that ‘chaos was the set of ideas persuading all these scientists that they were members of a shared enterprise’ (1987, 307), Gleick shows no resistance to either the interdisciplinarity or the interdiscipline of chaos. On the other hand, whilst Roach and Conquergood appear to aim to create a distance from the limitation implicit in the word ‘discipline’, Grisham suggest the same with ‘interdisciplinarity’. Nevertheless, the same features employed by them in differentiating current transformations in their disciplines also define interdisciplinary processes.

Grisham seems to understand that to ‘go beyond the scope of disciplines altogether’ is contrary to interdisciplinarity. However, drawing on Barthes, it is my understanding that it is this very process of going beyond the scope of disciplines that constitutes interdisciplinarity. On the other hand, Renato Cohen considers the idea of an ‘interdiscipline’ as fundamental in approaching performance art (1989, 50). The arts in performance have been amalgamated not only through an aim to renovate art forms (opera or drama in Wagner’s work, painting, sculpture, dance, theatre or music in performance art), but also to go beyond the scope of the disciplines altogether. Thus, performance art is an example of an artistic interdiscipline. As such, performance art is a main concept for this thesis, and we must return to it after approaching the other interdisciplinary intensities.

²⁶ The connections with the arts are just briefly touched by on Gleick’s ninth chapter (1987). For José A. Sánchez, the ambiguous relationship between order and chaos is one of the creative obsessions of the interdisciplinary work of Jan Fabre, amongst others artists (1999, 186). Mercè Saumell sums up chaos within the artistic contemporaneity as a ‘metaphor which takes over from a cultural disease, that each creator interprets in her/his own manner [...] Catastrophe also implies beginning again’ (1990, 119). ‘Metàfora que releva una malaltia cultural, que cada creador interpreta a la seva manera [...] Catàstrofe implica també començar de nou.’

'Multidisciplinarity' is one of the interdisciplinary intensities which is often employed to mean 'interdisciplinarity' itself. 'Multidisciplinarity' is an assembly of different disciplines without any interaction amongst them. A multidisciplinary project may focus on the same issue but the approaches will not be related: an exchange of contributions may appear but this is not stimulated or intentional. Many multimedia shows may be considered multidisciplinary examples when they present different disciplines bringing their works together into a same time-space, without any co-ordination to promote exchanges amongst the involved disciplines.

Monica Luni and Haavve Fjell from Oslo's Aurin Teatret and Pain Solution organised a multidisciplinary event in Brasília in 1995, called *Erotica*. They invited painters, performers, videomakers, non-artists and members of different organisations to bring their works about a main theme which was eroticism to a common space. Neither Luni or Fjell were organising the disposition of works and performances. Although providing the theme and the space, they were not promoting relationships amongst the participants who had no common objective besides sharing that time-space with their works. It was an artistically multidisciplinary event.

'Pluridisciplinarity' is the juxtaposition of various disciplines which are considered close, such as mathematics and physics or French and Latin (Orthoff 1994, 5). They are brought together within the same plan with multiple objectives. It is an association of disciplines with a certain level of co-operation or relations among the disciplines but without a double co-ordination or interaction towards a mutual goal. Pluridisciplinarity differs from multidisciplinary at the level of a larger interest in investigating other discipline(s). One discipline benefits from contact with other discipline.

Japiassu (1978) and Ivani Fazenda (1991) see 'cross-disciplinarity', a term coined by Eric Jantsch, as a more refined form of pluridisciplinarity. The disciplines exchange

information through a co-ordinator which is from one of the disciplines involved: s/he approaches her/his discipline through the perspective of another discipline. The history of medicine and the mathematics of music are cross-disciplinary examples. It still presents one discipline benefiting from other one.

These definitions of pluri- and cross-disciplinarity seem easily blurred. By juxtaposing two artistic examples, it may be possible to investigate how these differences are played out.

The first example is London South Bank's annual event Melt Down. Laurie Anderson was the event's curator in 1997. It could be considered a multidisciplinary event for the eclectic scope of events combined exhibitions, scenic performances (dance, theatre and music), and installations by different artists. These were not, however, engaged in any exchange amongst themselves. Anderson organised a final concert-show, as a closing ceremony. The artistically multidisciplinary show presented Robert Wilson performing with Bill T. Jones, Salman Rudshie and Christopher Knowles reading their own texts, Ryiuchi Sakamoto, Lou Reed or Anderson playing after or during projections of computer animated texts by Gilles Deleuze or David Byrne.

The second example is Rachel Steward and David Rainbird's *ENGAGED*. This was an arts magazine edited by Steward and co-created and designed by Rainbird also in London, from November 1994 to January 1998. According to the Magazine website, *ENGAGED* aimed 'to examine and promote other relevant forms of publishing whilst remaining within the familiar and enjoyable realms of the magazine format' (1999, 1).²⁷

Each issue of the magazine appeared in a different medium. Number 1 was published on a T-shirt; number 2 was a large colour poster; number 3 was a CD-ROM

²⁷ See *ENGAGED* Magazine website at <http://www.engaged.demon.co.uk/>.

publishing the work of digital artists; number 4 was a tinned Pop and Mail art issue (May 1996); number 5 was a video issue featuring the work of film-makers and animators (March 1997), and number 6 was a radio issue which was broadcast on radio stations around the world (January 1998 onwards).²⁸

These two examples displays different levels of interdisciplinarity. Anderson's co-ordination of her final event reassured its pluridisciplinarity, through the gathering and organisation of different artists and disciplines and their multiple objectives. Steward and Rainbird's twofold co-ordination also organised the artistically pluridisciplinary groups and media. Nevertheless, they joined the multiple objectives into a central one; this central objective was the cross-disciplinary exploration which materialised as *Engaged* itself. Whilst Anderson's Melt Down may be an example of an artistic multidisciplinary turning into pluridisciplinarity, *ENGAGED* achieved an artistically interdisciplinary object (the magazine) through a pluri- or cross-disciplinary process.

In the final letter from the editor published on the Internet, Steward acknowledges 'an amazing journey, leaping from format to format, discovering different groups of people working in different mediums, but all dedicated to the creation and promotion of challenging and stimulating work in their specific fields' (1991, 1).²⁹ In an unpublished interview with the author via e-mail, Steward explains that

the initial premise of the magazine was that it was to publish writing and text incorporated into other artforms. [...] I think some of the most interesting work used language in an apparently casual way and the worst work was in fact that of poets trying to push boundaries but never really freeing themselves of the tradition and form of a poem and the authority of the written word.³⁰

²⁸ Whilst the third issue may be explored at the web site, the sixth issue is available at <http://www.sfb-berlin.de/Radio/radio.html/>. The fourth issue was exhibited in 1999 as part of an installation in the Virgin Club Lounge at Heathrow.

²⁹ See <http://www.engaged.demon.co.uk/info/edit.html>.

³⁰ Unpublished interview with the author via e-mail, 10 July 2000.

Steward shows that traditional roots and artistic conventions tempt and then dismantle apparent attempts at breaking boundaries, or pseudo interdisciplinary projects. She points out in the same e-interview that

ENGAGED did begin as a poetry magazine – but I don't think I ever really saw it as this – the main focus was to examine other forms of publication taking a readership on a journey – challenging all those notions within the arena of magazine publishing that the known, fixed thing is the way to go. I think the way brands have re-invented themselves across a broad range of media indicate that the public are much smarter and willing to experiment than the bland mainstream publication of averages and statistics allows. And also to some extent challenging that hierarchy of credible media through which to publish – so as a performance poet publishing in performance was not enough but in print would give me much more credibility.

Although apparently departing from the 'known, fixed thing', Steward and Rainbird's magazine employed other art forms to transform the method of presentation (the magazine). Steward calls attention to a critical, statistical, mainstream discrepancy – in relation to the re-invention of artistic brands – which is not necessarily followed or obeyed by the public. For Roland Barthes, this discrepancy matches an uneasiness with classification demanded by other objects or language which has diagnosed a special mutation; this 'must not, however, be overestimated: it is more in the nature of an epistemological slide [*glissement*] than of a real break [*coupure*]' (1977, 155). *ENGAGED*'s cross-disciplinarity created a hybrid which disclosed a mutation and demanded other readings, configuring an artistic interdisciplinarity.³¹

These nuances or options of co-ordination in pluridisciplinary and cross-disciplinary processes are subtle and may be blurred. If this taxonomy of interdisciplinary intensities is followed *a la lettre*, it might seem rigid and then

³¹ This epistemological slide seems to have been achieved by *ENGAGED*. The magazine's website presents reviews like the UK *Creative Review*: 'a magazine like no other, and not even like itself'. Whilst Australia's *Monument* considered it 'possibly the world's most creative magazine', *Entertainment Today* (USA) pointed out that '*ENGAGED* Radio [...] makes you rethink the possibility of sound'. According to the last editor's letter, 'the magazine is due to be included in *The Art Book Periodical* published by Blackwells, and in *The Convergence; an Investigation into Interactive Multimedia Design* published by Edward Booth Clibborn Editions. It is also to be used in a course book for the GCSE Media Studies in a section discussing the future of publishing' (1999, 1).

contradictory compared to the open – and liberating – cross-over which happens between these forms of exchanges amongst arts or other disciplines. Whilst the slippery postmodern arts question moves towards new categorisations which will inevitably be again trespassed, they disclose the fallibility of definitions of both discipline and disciplinary exchanges.

This study draws on these previous definitions and sees pluridisciplinary and cross-disciplinary as both façades of co-ordinated projects. These co-ordinations go beyond the multidisciplinary gathering. It does not mean that multidisciplinary projects might not be a move towards interdisciplinarity. However, pluri- and cross-disciplinary projects question the parameters of one discipline or art media and look at, or search through another discipline(s) or art(s). The artistic field is thus expanded. These are necessary steps forward towards achieving (or not) the interdisciplinary slide which involves more than one discipline.

Interdisciplinarity may assume conceptual disguises and semantic nuances but it is an attitude against the positivist isolation of fields of knowledge which had a pinnacle within the nineteenth century. Therefore, the arts – as an ‘indiscipline’, an ‘antidiscipline’ or an ‘undiscipline’ – might be considered ‘interdisciplines’, whilst they operate within the objectives of crossing disciplinary frontiers and reaching other objects. Interdisciplinary procedures refuse compartmentalised isolations which obstruct the possibilities of exchanges and interactions amongst different arts and sciences. Gleick states that ‘a new science arises out of one that has reached a dead end. Often a revolution has an interdisciplinary character – its central discoveries [...] come from people straying outside the normal bounds of their specialties’ (1987, 37).

The study of chaos brought different sciences into partnerships ‘that were inconceivable a few years before’ (Gleick 1987, 79). Performance studies has been gathering scenic, visual and musical artists, anthropologists, neurologists, historians,

linguists, sociologists, psychoanalysts and/or sociologists. Nevertheless, Ari Paulo Jantsch and Lucídio Bianchetti indicate that 'partnership = interdisciplinarity = redemption of knowledge' is not a valid formula (1995, 18). Amongst other arts, theatre knows this invalidity well because of its characteristic of involving different aspects in a collective work. Jantsch and Bianchetti reminds us once more that it is fundamental to regard interdisciplinary intercourse not as the sum of the expertise from different disciplines, but the interaction amongst two or more disciplines.

This interaction does not block a possible friction amongst the different parts which try to channel (or not) this friction towards positive results. Marilyn Strathern describes as awkward and dramatic 'the tension experienced by those who practice feminist anthropology. They are caught between structures: the scholar is faced with two different ways of relating to her or his subject matter' (1987, 286).³² Nevertheless, the interdisciplinary interaction attempts to build a bridge across the disciplines' previous boundaries and aims for a reciprocity of gains. These disciplines demand that the involved individuals transcend their specialities, becoming aware of their own limits in order to welcome the contributions of other discipline(s). To be characterised as interdisciplinarity, the group involved will have to construct a dialogue which faces the contradiction and contestedness that are to be approached and produced in each interdisciplinary effort or programme. These programmes should be based on the respect of the autonomy and the specific knowledge of each discipline involved.

The main objective for both fields is a new – or other – object, understanding, technique, advance or instrument. The positive results are represented by the shared 'interests of a new object and a new language, neither of which has a place in the field of the sciences that were to be brought together' (Barthes 1977, 155). Engineering of

³² See Strathern (1987). For another introduction on feminist anthropologies see Girão (1997).

the solid crystalline, performance studies, biochemistry, dance theatre, ecology and psychodrama are the results of interdisciplinary transactions.

This positive result implies an epistemological slide which indicates new methods, approaches and boundaries or a paradigmatic shift for the involved disciplines. What 'an epistemological slide' may mean might differ amongst different practitioners and critics. Also drawing on Kuhn, Philip Auslander criticises Richard Schechner's view of performance as a *new* paradigm for theatre studies, instead of assuming 'continuity rather than rupture between Theatre Studies and Performance Studies. [...] Performance Studies appears to be an articulation of the Theatre Studies paradigm, not a revolutionary new paradigm' (1997, 1-3). Auslander seems to see performance as a paradigmatic shift or epistemological slide for both theatre studies and practice.

The transgression of disciplinary boundaries has been characterising many of the efforts of artists and critics crossing different artistic languages on behalf of what they may/might consider or understand as a relevant slide in their practices and lives. *ENGAGED* seems to indicate this epistemological slide which this study also aims to uncover in La Fura dels Baus' first trilogy.

Both *ENGAGED* and *La Fura* are artistic manifestations which promoted re-definitions within the epistemological fields of theatre and publishing. For Rosalind Krauss, postmodernist arts are no longer 'defined in relation to a given medium... but rather in relation to the logical operations on a set of cultural terms, for which any medium – photography, books, lines on walls, or sculpture itself – might be used' (1979, 31). Krauss is one of the critics who regards the postmodern arts as embedded in evasive, interdisciplinary and theatrical frames (Feral 1982; Sayre 1988; Kaye 1994).

Within this expanded artistic terrain or postmodernism, 'performance' 'operates as the signature of a time of transition', as synthesised by Erika Fischer-Lichte (1997,

36). As adumbrated in the general introduction of this thesis, 1990s performance is conspicuously related to performance art's theatricality and artistic break of fixed, disciplinary limits.³³ Having gone beyond the object or text made familiar by previous conventions in plastic and scenic arts, performance as an artistic medium discloses a continuation of artistically interdisciplinary transitions in different contemporaneities. This phenomenon was questioned by so-called late modernism's art criticism (Greenberg 1961, Fried 1967), but is effusively demonstrated with performance art, an art form usually and prominently connected to fine, visual or plastic artists.

The multiple art forms of 'performance art' were new raids on isolated specialisations during the 1960s and 1970s.³⁴ 'Performance art' may be acknowledged as an artistically interdisciplinary phenomenon *par excellence*: it encompasses exchanges of different artistic languages and new or other art objects and manifestations resulting from these barterings (action paintings, Happenings, body art, live art, minimalism, conceptualism, mixed means, intermedia, action art, amongst others). This artistic trade happens within the meeting of those normally isolated boundaries amongst artistic and non-artistic, erudite and popular or 'high' and 'low' cultures which is also used to characterise postmodernism. Gregory Battcock and Robert Nickas add that arts 'would never be quite the same again [...] A lack of a strict definition [...] was indeed an advantage, for without clear and determined boundaries, performance was an open territory from its very beginnings' (1984, xi). In *The Art of Performance*, Battcock and Nickas foresaw that performance art would 'engage the imagination of more artists, more of the time, in the art of the future, than any other art form of our time' (1984, 96). RoseLee Goldberg was another collaborator in their book and in 1979 she had published her equally fundamental study *Performance Art: From Futurism to the*

³³ See pages 9 to 16 of this study.

³⁴ On a chronology of performance art from 1943 to 1979, see Cooper (1998).

Present. In the enlarged second version, she declares that ‘no other artistic form of expression has such a boundless manifesto, since each performer makes his or her own definition in the very process and manner of execution’ (1988, 9).

The dialectic of creation and destruction triggered by the end of World War II challenged the traditional dominance of the object over the act within art (and the text over the performance in theatre) on behalf of performative actions.³⁵ The materialist views of both culture and art were questioned by the ephemerality and immediacy of these actions. Boundaries between the artistic and her/his support were crossed on behalf of actions being simultaneously the subject and the object. Jackson Pollock, John Cage, Lucio Fontana and Shozo Shimamoto took the historical vanguards’ concerns and experiments with live action to a further degree.

These creators are selected by Schimmel as ‘four artists who would exert a tremendous influence on the development of postwar art [which] began to place a new emphasis on the role of the act in the creation of the object’ (1998, 18). Drawing on Barbara Rose (1979), Schimmel suggests that Pollock’s legacy was fundamental to Allan Kaprow’s Happenings in the late 1950s (1998, 20). Rose draws on Kaprow’s *The Legacy of Jackson Pollock* (1958) to suggest that Kaprow might have seen in Hans Namuth’s photos of Pollock’s creative actions ‘the liberating possibility of uninhibited acting out – catharsis through art’ (1979, 114).³⁶ This relationship between Pollock and the Happenings is recalled here because these were art forms which were encompassed in a wider scope represented by performance art. Furthermore, the primacy of act and the acting out of painting meant a cross-fertilisation between both art and theatre.

³⁵ On performance art and the dialectic mentioned above, see pages 13 to 15 of this study and for further reading on this subject see Schimmel’s first chapter (1998).

³⁶ See Kaprow (1958).

Also for these interdisciplinary negotiations, the general introduction of this study highlighted the fact that the 1960s witnessed a turmoil within which a phenomenon of social transformation took on the appearance of a world dimension.³⁷ Josep Ramoneda quotes Jacques Derrida's statement about those times, 'an event that we do not know to denominate through any other form than its date, 1968' (1999, 497).³⁸ The decade triggered different changes in distinct fields of knowledge which have been accelerated by/within the supermodern condition; arts practices were also undergoing changes which provoked cultural debates within the postmodernist arts. Both practices and debates witnessed and shaped performance art's emergence as an interdisciplinary medium.

1.3. Afterwords

This postmodern condition of the arts seems to imply that artistic interdisciplinarity has been enhanced within supermodernity. Within these debates, interdisciplinarity has been pointed out as a rupture between modernism and postmodernism. Nevertheless, Josette Feral points out that performance as an art form which crosses disciplinary margins, 'seems paradoxically to correspond on all counts to the new theatre invoked by Antonin Artaud: a theatre of cruelty and violence, of the body and its drives, of displacement and "disruption", a non-narrative and non-representative theatre' (1982, 170-1).

Artistic interdisciplinarity was visibly claimed by Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty just as the Symbolists, Constructivists, Futurists, Dadaists and Surrealists also privileged cross-disciplinarity within the radical retheatricalisation of theatre proposed at the cross of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Notwithstanding, artistic interdisciplinarity

³⁷ See pages 28 to 32 of this study.

³⁸ 'Un acontecimiento que no sabemos denominar de otra forma que por su fecha, 1968'

seems to permeate and shape the history of the scenic arts, and not only throughout the twentieth century: this interdisciplinary presence dates back to ancient times before its apparently conspicuous presence in our contemporaneity. Therefore, before elaborating further the modernist and postmodernist debates in arts triggered by artistic interdisciplinary performances, the following chapter examines some artistically interdisciplinary antecedents within theatre history, or the interdisciplinary presence in the arts before both performance art and postmodernism.

CHAPTER 2

ARTISTIC INTERDISCIPLINARY INSTANCES

Introduction

Chapter 2 investigates some instances of artistically interdisciplinary practice in theatre before and after performance art. The history of artistic interdisciplinarity in theatre is beyond the reach of this thesis. However, a look at its presence in different arts, cultures and periods may help this study in considering to what extent it might be indicated that artistic interdisciplinarity has been cast aside within theatre history.

The first section departs from recalling the critical acknowledgement of multidisciplinary and cross-disciplinary intensities in tribal rites before Greek theatre. The first section seeks to explore artistic interdisciplinarity before modernity. It focuses on introducing and examining the Indian theatre treatise, *Natya-Sastra*, as an artistically interdisciplinary antecedent to modernism, performance art and postmodernism. Eastern theatre has been considered to have different objectives and criteria, but other possible practices and concepts within the worlds' theatrical languages may gainsay Western, and ancient, disciplinary or detrimental views of theatre.

The *Natya-Sastra* appears to show rhysomatic variables that may be dated back to either an almost contemporaneous or even anterior time to Aristotle's *Poetics* and Ancient Greek theatre. While the *Poetics* is usually attributed to 400 BC, the *Natya-Sastra* is thought to have been composed by Bharatamuni, also called Bharata, who was possibly an actor. Bharata is also a generic name for India, and for the world. R. P. Kulkarni affirms that 'opinions of scholars regarding the time of Bharata differ. Bharata might have lived sometimes between 500 BC and 100 AD according to Visvesvara or

might be between 200 BC and 200 AD as opined by Ketkar' (1994, 13). Jatinder Verma affirms the treatise was written 'around AD 400' (1996, 199). The first section consults Aristotle's *Poetics*, for a contrast and comparison of disciplinarity and interdisciplinarity in Eastern or Western and Ancient theatre theories. This thesis suggests a study of different cultures during the same period to attempt a wider look at artistic interdisciplinarity and theatre in pre-modern times.

The second section explores the presence of theatre, performance art and performance in artistic debates of late modernism and postmodernism to emphasize artistic interdisciplinary operations within these debates and practices.

2.1. The *Natya-Sastra*

Richard Schechner highlights the fact that 'the phenomenon called either/all "drama", "theatre", "performance" occurs among all the world's peoples and dates back as far as historians, archaeologists, and anthropologists can go' (1973, 5). Beginning his enterprise in searching out the blurred limits between performance and theatre, Schechner already indicates the necessary support from other disciplines to site theatre and performance. Theatre and performance languages are inclusive grounds which encompass and define each other, unless exclusive definitions are used to restrict the transit between them.¹

Blurring or denying limits between theatre, performance art and performance, contemporary artists and critics draw our attention to the mutual exchanges amongst these epistemological margins. This can also be dated back as far as historians, archaeologists and anthropologists can go. RoseLee Goldberg has not been the only

¹ John Cage and Richard Kostelanetz are examples of wider understandings of theatre that avoided such definitions. Cage points out in an interview with Kostelanetz that the making of theatre means 'to bring all these things together that people could hear and see' (1970, 56). For Kostelanetz, theatre is 'any situation where some people perform for others, regardless of whether the spectators intend to be an audience' (1970, 7-8).

critic to point out performance art's elements in ancient, tribal rituals. Gerhard Lischka amplifies these links to all the arts:

with one glance at innumerable tribal cultures all around the globe we can discern that life and art have always been linked; performance art always inherent to them. Art was then increasingly put in service of whatever ideology, but retained at its core the universal qualities that survived (1992, 139-40).

In the same vein, Kostelanetz affirms that

indeed, as primitive [sic] ceremonies integrated dance and drama, song and sculpture, the separation of these arts probably followed in the development of human consciousness from the recognition of arts as distinct from life; and once these several kinds of artistic expressions were recognized as distinctly different, individuals could specialize in one or another field and, in the Renaissance, sign their names to personal work (1994, 3).

Specialisation, integrated arts, Renaissance and performance art are connected by Attanazio di Felice, who suggests that performance art as the field of interdisciplinary artistic concerns found prototypes in the Italian Renaissance. Felice points out that 'performance has been a key artistic activity from the very beginnings of our modern concept of the artistic role, corresponding with the emergence of what remains our guiding principle of individualism in society' (1984, 4).²

The plural scientific and artistically interdisciplinary actions of da Vinci problematised assumptions or divisions of roles until 'the rationalism of Descartes became popular enough for people to begin thinking of knowledge and imagination as hindrances to each other' (Felice 1984, 14). Felice also shows that the increasing proclivity into specialisation and mutually exclusive professions climaxed in the 1700s, permeated by 'the steady secularization of philosophy, the attendant lessening of the

² Italian artists such as Leon Battista Alberti, Leonardo da Vinci and Gian Lorenzo Bernini moved simultaneously within different art forms through the available technology and supported by a liberal philosophic framework and their patrons. Felice stresses Bernini's Baroque theatricalisation of plastic arts, sculptures and architecture in his 'many staged spectacles, for which he wrote the scripts, designed the scenes and costumes, carved the sculptures, planned effects of lighting and sound, and undertook the complete direction and execution of the works himself, including elaborate feats of engineering' (1984, 19). See Felice (1984).

significance of court ritual and pageantry, and the growth of public forms of theatre' (1984, 22). The growth cited by Felice implied a fragmentation of theatrical creation. Acting, costumes, lights, make up and scenery design, writing, directing and all the different aspects related to theatre, were gradually dismembered into different specialisations, following the advent of new technologies and the expansion of information and skills concerned with each component. Disciplinary limits and hierarchical roles were privileged paralleling the positivist advance of modernity.

This section, however, seeks to trace artistic interdisciplinarity in theatre back to pre-modern times. Theatre elements were also present in the performative events of different cultures and vice-versa. The positive exchanges between different sciences and arts have been re-examining these links, as the interdisciplinary dialogues between theatre and New Historicism (McConnachie 1991) or theatre and anthropology make clear.³ The critical dissemination of theatre history no longer ratifies Ancient Greek theatre as the 'sudden' appearance of an artistic organisation of the performative presence in everyday life. Greek theatre was a site of interdisciplinarity. Kostelanetz states that 'the mixing of presentational means is probably as old as theatre itself' (1994, 4). A. M. Nagler recalls the simultaneous use of different artistic languages on the Greek stages before and during Aristotle's time (1952, 3-15).⁴ Opera was an artistically interdisciplinary form that 'indeed originated in an attempt to revive the form of Greek tragedy' after Romanticism's ideas of synthesis of arts, as posited by Jack Stein (1973, 3).⁵ Nevertheless, in overvaluing Aristotle's *Poetics*, it seems that Western theatre has also overlooked the artistic interdisciplinarity in the history of

³ See Schechner and Appel (1990) or Barba and Savarese (1991) to have complementary overviews on dialogues between theatre and anthropology.

⁴ See Nagler's first chapter (1952).

⁵ See Sánchez's Introduction (1999b) for a valuable explanation of the artistically cross-disciplinary concept of mimesis before the current understanding reduced to imitation and literature.

theatre. Or it might be suggested that much of Western theatre has privileged an exclusive cross-disciplinary barter with literature.

Aristotle's vision of theatre has transformed his *Poetics* into a canon followed by scholars and dramatists for centuries. Ronald Vince points out that

although since the sixteenth-century 'rediscovery' of Greek tragedy and Aristotle's *Poetics* interest in the Greek theatre itself has been confined principally to the academy, to critical theorizing, and to scholarly revivals, we should not underestimate the effect of such interest on commonly held perceptions of theatre and its history (1997, 45).

Aristotle's main focus was on the written text and its author's skills in dealing with a narrative. The vital function of performance in the theatrical event was also acknowledged by Aristotle since he included *opsis* (which has been translated as 'spectacle') amongst the six parts of every tragedy together with plot, character, diction, thought and song. Stephen Halliwell affirms that 'by doing so he appears to envisage performance as the appropriate and essential embodiment of dramatic poetry' (1986, 339).⁶ However, Aristotle seems to minimise the performance text and its connection with other arts when he writes that

the Spectacle has, indeed, an emotional attraction of its own, but, of all the parts, it is the least artistic, and connected least with the art of poetry. For the power of Tragedy, we may be sure, is felt even apart from representation and actors. Besides, the production of spectacular effects depends more on the art of the stage machinist than on that of the poet (VI, 1450b in Butcher 1951, 29-30).

Aristotle seems to be radical in ranking down the performance text. For Vince, this privileging of the literary over the theatrical draws attention to Aristotle's 'almost total neglect in the *Poetics* of the role of the perceptual elements in drama, including song, dance, costume and scenery [...] Dramatic theory in Western thought was destined from its beginnings to concern itself almost exclusively with the dramatic text'

⁶ See Halliwell's Appendix 3 on 'spectacle' (*opsis*) (1986).

(1997, 43-4). Vince questions the work of scholars who continue to use the Aristotelian paradigm without contextualising it within cultural developments of the fourth century.

Vince is just one of the critics and practitioners who question this disciplinary approach of theatre aesthetics which lessens the performative potential of this art. He wonders whether the *Poetics* would have been of any importance to Aeschylus and his notorious spectacular productions (1997, 43). Nevertheless, the Aristotelian perception of theatre and his *Poetics* prevailed during centuries, privileging a view of theatre as an artistic discipline regulated by literature and action imitated. As such, the *Natya-Sastra* may be another useful tool in understanding theatre as more than the enactment of dramas.

The *Natya-Sastra* was translated by Radha Vallabh Tripath as a discipline regulating the practice (*Natya*) of the actors (*natas*) (1991, 15).⁷ The treatise unfolds in its thirty-six chapters a detailed inquiry about the origins of theatre, the divisions of plays together with their names, functions and modes, junctures of the plot and stages of action. The epistemological detailing of the treatise examines speech, phonetics, prosody, figures of speech, metres, dramatic speech, vowels and consonants, description of the forms of dramas, the study of bodily stimulus and emotional reactions, gaits and *rasa* within many other facets of theatre.

Some of its chapters focus on performance (*abhinava*) and production (*prayoga*). Qualities of an ideal performance, the producer and the director or organiser, the theatre-houses and their different shapes, measures and specificities of use, stage-crafts, make up, costumes, properties and ornaments, even the worship of the stage and qualities of a critic or an audience are contemplated by the *Natya-Sastra*. Bharatamuni is meticulous in his descriptions and details. Nevertheless, the author often remarks that

⁷ See Rangacharya (1996) for an introduction on the Indian treatise.

his rules or given information cannot be considered as principal or exclusive, since ‘the final authority is the world itself’ (Rangacharya 1996, 38). He also affirms that ‘it is not possible to form rules (or give directions) for acting or conveying the (unbelievable) various actions and objects of the world’ (XXV-128 in Rangacharya 1996, 29).

Bharatamuni directs the aspiring actor or playwright with a full description and advice for each step in the practice of the theatrical language. In spite of that, there is a space for the comprehension of its permanent mutation according to the nature of a creative area of knowledge related to the study of human beings. Whilst he writes about thirty-six kinds of glances conveying thirty-six different meanings, he also reminds the readers of the fact that ‘of course, there are many other ways (of conveying meaning by the position and the movement of the head) but those can be studied by observing the habits of people and then introduced in the acting’ (VII-36 in Rangacharya 1996, 29).

The first chapter relates a mythological creation of theatre as an answer of Brahma to the request of Indra and other gods. It is Brahma himself who suggests the inclusion of music and dance in the practice and in the treatise. The new art should combine entertainment and enlightenment, and should not only be seen but heard. Tripathi equally draws attention to an anti-Aristotelian and inclusive, artistically cross-disciplinary drive when he recollects that ‘the whole creative process of *Natya* runs in a continuous cycle [lying] in proper integration and synthesis of the elements’ in the different arts (1991, 15-16).

This open framework also nurtures an idea of theatre as a constant experimental arena for artistic interdisciplinarity. This idea is sustained theoretically – perhaps for the first time – by the *Natya-Sastra*. Adya Rangacharya points out that ‘drama was considered *kavya* or literature and then distinguished as *drsya kavya*, i.e. literature that could also be seen and understood [...] Bharata [...] further gave rules to guide authors as to how audio-visual literature should be written’ (1996, 47). ‘Audio-visual literature’

calls our attention to interdisciplinary intensities amongst the Eastern arts, that Kathakali or Noh, and later Kabuki and Butoh may attest to.⁸ It is not a refusal of the word on the stage, but a recognition that literature was only one of the arts involved in the theatrical performance. For B. K. Takkar, the *Natya-Sastra* was

written with the full consciousness of drama as a multi-media art form, relying for its effects, the *Rasanubhava*, not merely on the text prepared by the poet but on many factors such as acting, costumes, dancing, music, choreography, direction, the playhouse and the like (1984, 7-8).

For Kapila Malik Vatsyayan, the Eastern arts tradition unfolds, as a 'remarkable fusion of music, dance, spectacle and drama (in contrast to the Western tradition of separating these components into separate arts)' (1971, 19). She also points out that in the *Natya-Sastra*

there was also an unchallenged recognition and acceptance of the interdependence and interrelationship of the arts. Indeed, no art asserted its autonomy and at no time was it accepted that the artist in one medium could be effective without a technical knowledge of other media (1971, 19).

This artistic cross-disciplinarity or a free interdisciplinary transit allowed by the Indian treatise seems to be part of the aesthetic freedom that Leonard C. Pronko argues as absent in Western theatre:

our [Western] hypertrophied rational faculties have led us in the past three hundred years, and particularly since the industrial revolution and the late nineteenth century age of science, to theatre that is most often as small as life. [...] Like our great theatre of the past, [the pre-modern theatre of Asia] is both realistic and theatricalized, both illusionistic and presentational. It possesses at once reality and style, whereas we most often seem to embrace one or the other (1971, 36).

Contemporary theatres, however, have been embracing and playing with both domains. Bert O. States explains that Expressionism allowed Western theatre to re-enter 'the world of style; [...] and most important, a style that could juxtapose various degrees of realism and nonrealism, from the filthiest cellar of hard-core naturalism to the most

⁸ For an overview on pre-modern Eastern arts forms see Brandon (1971).

flagrant symbolism' (1985, 89). Both representation and this 'hard-core naturalism' were conspicuously raided by successive waves of Symbolists, Futurists, Constructivists, Dadaists, Bauhaus and Surrealists, who assumed an interdependence of the arts.⁹

This apparent link between the Indian treatise and the historical vanguards may also be seen in the integration of theatrical elements, other artistic languages and/or extra-theatrical sources which should be reflected in the performance. The *Natya-Sastra* proposed these interplays through four components that should not be viewed or practised in isolation from each other. These are verbal utterance (*angika*) which should be expressed through songs and music; movement (*vacika*) through bodily gestures and facial expressions; embellishment (*aharya*) through costumes, make up and ornaments, and the representation of temperament (*sattvika*) through the mind and emotions. The *Natya-Sastra* did not defend an entrenchment in the discipline of theatre to arrive at the interdependent expression of these elements. Instead, the treatise postulated the employment of all the artistic languages to reach an audio-visual dramaturgy or multi-media art form (Rangacharya 1996, 47).

Verma sees the integration of the four components proposed by Bharatamuni as a 'fourfold conception of theatre' which

led to a practice that Brecht, much later, in 1935, described as 'total theatre', on seeing a troupe of Beijing Opera actors in Berlin. Movement and music, in this conception, are not ancillary to the spoken word but form an integral part of the 'text of performance' (1996, 199).

This 'total theatre' also joins distinct efforts of achieving this scenic totality within the historical vanguards, like those of the Symbolists, Adolphe Appia, Vsevolod Meyerhold, Antonin Artaud and/or Bauhaus, to mention some antecedents to Brecht.

⁹ For an introduction on Expressionism see Innes' chapter 4 (1993). The first five chapters of Goldberg (1988) introduce respectively Futurism, Constructivism, Dadaism (including an overview of Expressionism), Surrealism and Bauhaus. On Bauhaus see Molnar, Moholy-Nagy and Schlemmer (1979).

'Total theatre' has been used to define La Fura's aesthetics decades later and if there still is a need for this use, it also seems to function against a 'partial theatre'. This partiality was prominently associated with the predominance of the word and literature on the stage. Gordon Craig had pointed out in his *'Literary' Theatres* (1908) that 'when literary men shall be content and patient enough to study the art of theatre as an art separate from the art of literature, there will be nothing to prevent us from welcoming them into the house' (1983, 15).¹⁰

Craig is clear in his critique of an Aristotelian understanding of theatre which configured a traditional and partial theatre history. It may be said that this artistically interdisciplinary idea of theatre theorised and practised in Eastern worlds was decisively responsible for the Western interest of artists, such as Meyerhold, Craig, Artaud or Bauhaus in these practices. The common aim that assembled these and other diverse theatre artists and movements within the historical vanguards was a theorised and practised transformation – or retheatricalisation – of theatre.¹¹ The re-definition of the theatrical language included a radical questioning of the performance's space/time axis, the theatrical text, the relational feature of this art (or the relationship of performers and the audiences), and creative and technical hierarchies.

The first third of the twentieth century was permeated by an intense level of artistic cross-disciplinarity. This cross-disciplinarity resulted in interdisciplinary works which recharted the theatrical language. Compared to the *Natya-Sastra*, there is a significant amount of Western publications about the historical vanguards. It is not an ambition of this thesis to substantiate further material for the study of this artistic phenomenon.¹² However, it has to be mentioned the collaborations of Appia and Emile

¹⁰ Roose-Evans (1989) and Sánchez (1999b) provide complementary introductions to these artists. On Craig see Bablet (1981) and Walton (1983). Both authors include texts by the artist.

¹¹ The catch principle 'retheatricalise the theatre' is credited to Fuchs. See Fuchs (1972).

¹² See Goldberg (1988).

Dalcroze in Hellerau,¹³ Vladimir Mayakovsky and Vsevolod Meyerhold together with Constructivist artists Lyubov Popova and Kasimir Malevich¹⁴ or the work of Jean Cocteau, Erik Satie, Léonide Massine and the Ballet's Suédois' directors Serge Diaguilev and Rolf de Maré in *Parade* (1917),¹⁵ amongst many other collaborations which questioned aesthetic limits between distinct art forms.

Against the conventional ideas of theatre, Cocteau envisaged 'a new mixed media genre' within which a new generation would 'continue its experiment in which the fantastic, the dance, acrobatics, mime, drama, satire, music and the spoken word combine' (in Goldberg 1988, 81).¹⁶ Guillaume Appolinaire described this mixed media as a 'new spirit', within which he found also a 'sort of surrealism in which I see the point of departure for a series of manifestations' (in Goldberg 1988, 78).¹⁷

Amongst these Surrealist manifestations, Artaud had aesthetic and metaphysical objectives in search of theatre performed in the totality of potentiality. He found in the Eastern arts - through the Balinese performance he saw in Paris in 1931 - a reference for his battles. Against the disciplinary or literary 'subservience to the lines' of Western psychological theatre (1989, 59), Artaud celebrates the idea that the 'first Balinese theatre show derived from dance, singing, mime and music' (1989, 36).¹⁸ Artaud seemed to be searching for the 'mixed media genre' or 'new spirit' mentioned

¹³ On Appia see Appia (1981) and Beacham (1993). On Appia and Dalcroze's school see Beacham (1982).

¹⁴ Mayakovsky and Meyerhold conceived together works like *Mystery Bouffe* (1918), *The Red Bug* (1926) and *The Bath House* (1930). A. M. Ripellino considers that Mayakovsky was as important to Meyerhold's theatre as Chekhov was to the Moscow Art Theatre (1986, 238). On Mayakovsky and the Russian theatre vanguard, Futurism and Constructivism see Ripellino (1986). Three of the nine chapters of his valuable book approach the artistic collaboration of both artists. His third chapter examines in details *The Bath House*. This study has used the Brazilian translation, but there is a French translation by Mario Rossi, *Maïakovski et le théâtre russe d'avant-garde* (Paris: L'Arche, 1965).

¹⁵ Goldberg (1988) and Sánchez (1999b) present complementary descriptions of this cross-disciplinary creation.

¹⁶ Cocteau was one of the artists involved in the Ballet Suédois' *Parade* (1917), a scenic show devised by Pablo Picasso, Erik Satie, Léonide Massine and the Ballet's directors, Serge Diaguilev and Rolf de Maré. Goldberg (1988) and Sánchez (1999b) present complementary descriptions of this cross-disciplinary creation.

¹⁷ On Surrealism, see Read (1936).

¹⁸ On Artaud see Artaud (1989) and Derrida (1978).

previously by Cocteau and Apollinaire. Both artists seem to anticipate Kostelanetz' 'theatre of mixed means', Dick Higgins' 'intermedia' or/and performance art.¹⁹

Prefacing Goldberg's *Performance: Live Art since the 60s* (1998), Laurie Anderson acknowledges her gratitude to both Goldberg's *Performance: Live Art from 1909 to the Present* (1979) and to the historical vanguards:

I was completely amazed to find that what we were doing had a rich and complex history. Marinetti, Tzara, Nall, and Schlemmer sprang from the pages. Dada and Futurists manifestos, diagrams, posters, sets, events, happenings, and concerts came alive in all their chaotic and fertile inventiveness (1998, 6).

Anderson calls attention to this cross-fertilisation of artistic disciplines, movements, cultures and periods that has been a key feature of postmodernity in Eastern and Western parts of the world. Goldberg stresses the fact that 'Marinetti's *Futurist Manifesto* was published in 1909 in Japan only three months after it appeared in *Le Figaro* in Paris' (1998, 12). Conversely, Innes recalls that 'standard European models ranging from Ibsen to Beckett had just as much impact on the development of modern Chinese drama, or Japanese experimental theatre. The value of this cross-cultural impetus for western modern and post-modernist art can hardly be overstated' (1993, 18).

The historical vanguards' retheatricalisation of theatre calls attention to an appearance of what was to progress into some overquoted features of the postmodern condition in the second half of the century; the distrust of metanarratives or/and interdisciplinarity and an evasiveness in the arts. Annabelle Henkin Melzer recalls that already in the first decades of the century, 'attempts to separate the Dada artists into plastic artist, *littérateur*, and theatre person is as hopeless as it is irrelevant. The elements of chance, spontaneity, and the immediacy of the creative act were championed by painters, poets, and performers alike' (1984, 48). She remarks on the

¹⁹ See Higgins (1978) and Kostelanetz (1970).

Dadaist shattering of modernity's values whilst she argues that the arts, 'no longer in the service of religion, ethics, history, or government, saluted an end to descriptive content' and increased the search for their creative possibilities outside their supposed disciplinary limits (1984, 48-9).

In his attacks against the Western civilisation, logic and reason, Artaud despised the theatre 'which excludes something from the totality of art, and thus, from the totality of life and its resources of signification: dance, music, volume, depth of plasticity, visible images, sonority, phonicity, etc', as articulated by Jacques Derrida (1978, 244). It is not irrelevant within this intermingling of disciplinarity, interdisciplinarity, modernism and postmodernism, which the following section explores, that Derrida seems to have found in Artaud an ally in his own intentions. Whilst Artaud undoes existing practice on behalf of another Western theatre he envisaged, Derrida doubles the artist's deconstruction of a Western culture which should also be transformed.

2.2. Modernist and Postmodernist Arts

Paralleling transformations in Western theatre after Artaud, the experimental processes and acts based on improvisations, collective creation, artistic cross-disciplinarity increased in the late 1950s and 1960s and progressed into the 1970s. The productions of the Living Theater or the Oficina (Brazil) during the late 1950s and 1960s, Peter Brook's production of Peter Weiss' *Marat/Sade* (1964) or Schechner and the Performance Group's *Dionisus 69* (1968) exemplify this.²⁰ These groups and collective creations employed and re-read both Artaudian principles and Jerzy Grotowski's method. The late 1960s and the 1970s' alternative theatre accentuated

²⁰ For an introduction on the Living, Oficina, Brook and Performance Group groups see respectively Styan's second volume (1981), Peixoto (1982), Brook (1987) and the Performance Group (1970).

connections amongst performative traditions in distinct parts of the world (Valentini 1991; Innes 1993; Bernal 1999).

In Spain and Catalonia, Els Joglars (founded in 1963) and Els Comediants (1971) were some of the groups that worked hybridised methodologies during the local manifestation of the alternative theatre which achieved visibility as the *Teatro Independiente* (TI). This 1960-80 nation-wide movement also comprises a visible example of those features of alternative theatre in the 1960s and 1970s being transformed further within the 1980s and 1990s, by groups which were founded in the last two years of the movement such as Sèmola Teatre (founded in 1978), La Fura (1979) or La Cubana (1980). TI's relevance to this thesis will be investigated in the following chapter.

The second half of the last century re-marks the liberating process for all the arts that the historical vanguards represented, as well as their liaisons with postmodern interdisciplinarity, theatricality or an evasiveness from categorisations. The blurring of the technical and creative roles' fixed divisions was during the 1960s and 1970s simultaneously the blurring of clear delimitations of action and object, text and performance, acting and performing, stage and audience or art and life which might demarcate either performance art or a postmodernist theatre.

Fredric Jameson is ironic about 'the attempt to see [postmodernism] by systematizing something that is resolutely unsystematic, and historicizing something that is resolutely ahistorical. "We have to name the system": this high point of the sixties finds an unexpected revival in the postmodernism debate' (1991, 418). This examination of these modernism/postmodernism debates does not aim to name what has already, again and not without problems, been entitled 'postmodernism'. This section focuses on these contradictions to investigate and to share further this study's

concept of artistic interdisciplinarity and its relationship to the interdisciplinary performance arts, with an emphasis on theatre.

The overlapping of artistic features present in both periods does not help to unravel but accentuates these contradictions which are present not only in the history of theatre. For Gray Watson the concept and meaning of postmodernism 'outside the realm of architecture is almost wholly nebulous' (1991, 4). Charles Jencks' criticism of 1960s' architecture sees the infancy of post-modernism in the 1960s which assaulted what he saw as both the reduced view of Modernist art and 'a thing of the past' (1986, 7-9). What Jencks calls 'a dying Modern Age' was counter-attacked by a post-modern architecture, characterised by a double coded aesthetic, or a balance that combines a histrionic entreaty and a technical sophistication and knowledge. This vision of Jencks might be perfectly related in theatre to – amongst others – Meyerhold's works, with the difference being the medium and the period mentioned.

Sally Banes has explained that in dance media the term postmodern started being used during the 1960s by Yvonne Rainer to describe her work and that of other practitioners, but in a 'primarily chronological sense' (1996, 30).²¹ Theirs 'was the generation that came after modern dance, which was itself originally an inclusive term applied to nearly any theatrical dance that departed from ballet or popular entertainment' (1996, 30). Echoing Baudrillard's refusal of the term 'postmodernism', Banes mentions the uneasiness of dance artists around the looseness of the term that 'can mean anything or nothing', but she thinks that this wide use urges not an avoidance but a definition and a discriminating use. Here Banes points out a simultaneous reality for diverse artistic and non-artistic fields.

²¹ See also Banes (1992) to have an introduction on postmodern dance.

The questioned rupture between modernism and postmodernism assumes other perspectives within theatre but it remains equally problematic. Richard Drain lists sanctioned peculiarities linked to the postmodernist arts that were characteristic in what he calls the modernist theatre of the first decades of the century. Besides the identification of an emphasis on the 'theatrical', Drain cites 'the play of styles, pastiche, the celebration of artifice; the disclosure of fictional happening as fictive; the abandonment of artistic unity; the cross-over with popular modes' (1995, 8).

Drain's two last features seem to approach cross-disciplinarity. Furthermore, other so-called postmodernist characteristics would also be noted in the theatre of the historical vanguards' scenic diversity such as simulation, appropriation, repetition, site-specificity, the raid on a contingent and arbitrary categorisation of the arts, intertextuality, the questioning of the author-God or the director's theology, and interdisciplinarity.

The accepted rupture between modernist and postmodernist arts may again be questioned through the same primacy of the act or theatricality that has been located as indicative of the rupture within so-called fine arts. These indications were accentuated in the theoretical approach to art history used by Clement Greenberg and Michael Fried. Contemporary criticism of modernist art and the defence of postmodernism in the arts were/are both deeply influenced by Greenberg's essay, *Modernist Painting* (1961). Fried's essay *Art and Objecthood* (1967) can be seen as following in Greenberg's wake. Distinct postmodernist art critics used Greenberg and Fried to legitimate a clear rupture with a currently institutionalised and neo-conservative modernism (Krauss 1979; Wallis 1984; Owens 1984; Crimp 1984).

Greenberg begins his theory through a non-postmodernist characteristic whilst he points out a supposed 'essence of modernism'. For him, it 'lies, as I see it, in the use of the characteristic methods of a discipline to criticize the discipline itself – not in order

to subvert it, but to entrench it more firmly in its area of competence' (1961, 48). Against the interdisciplinary subversion which theatrical or literary contamination represented, he defended flatness, colour, edge and scale as the innate qualifying characteristics of painting. He privileged objecthood and exclusive disciplinarity.

Fried continued Greenberg's defence of a late modernist pursuit of a disciplinary 'purity'. This purity could then be an example of a conspicuous modernist distinction. Through three propositions, Fried established both his idea of purity and a clear relation with theatre within his differentiation of modernist art:

- 1) The success, even the survival, of the arts has come increasingly to depend on their ability to defeat theatre.[...]
- 2) Art degenerates as it approaches the condition of theatre.[...]
- 3) The concepts of quality and value – and to the extent that these are central to art, the concept of art itself – are meaningful or wholly meaningful, only within the individual arts. What lies between the arts is theatre (1968, 139-42).

If juxtaposed with the structural changes shaping and being shaped by the 1960s and their arts, both Fried and Greenberg opened a vulnerability in their theories for two main reasons. Firstly, they attempted to define limits to a diversity of artistic manifestations which they believed to be able to encompass under a single frame of modernist art: their attempt happened in contradiction to the 1960s' increasing attack on existent conventions. Secondly, the critics defended an artistic purity which avoided interrelations with other arts.²²

This theoretical vulnerability was disclosed by an emphasis on a disciplinary entrenching of a language within itself in an ever-changing and interconnected world. Both critics also postulated an absence of the body or presence of the artist; either the body or presence might denote a non-welcomed theatricality, that in its turn revealed an

²² Susanne K. Langer could not be so easily positioned by postmodernist art criticism because she accepted 'principles of assimilation' amongst the arts to enhance each artistic medium (1957, 85). She raised questions about artistic hybridisation but endorsed 'conjoined arts' unlike Fried and Greenberg; although she believed that these should stop before the interdisciplinary level, otherwise 'all except one will cease to appear as what they are' (1957, 85).

equally undesired cross-disciplinarity. Happenings and Body Art were some of the artistic and performative manifestations that illustrate Greenberg and Fried's discrepancy, for these art forms were produced contemporaneously to both critics. This antithesis may be summarised by artistically interdisciplinary action.

Since 1943 interdisciplinary advances had already enlarged the limits of painting, sculpture and acting. This may be exemplified by Jackson Pollock, Yves Klein and George Mathieu's versions of action painting in Europe and the Americas. John Cage's *untitled event* in 1952, Gutai performances, Allan Kaprow's Happenings, Wolf Vostell's actions, Hermann Nitsch's commencement of the *Orgien Mysterien Theater* in 1958 were some of the artists and collectives who were shattering clear divisions amongst the arts, their objects, texts, plays and actions.

All these artists (apart from Klein who died in 1961) carried on "impure" acts during the period 1961-67 which covers both Greenberg and Fried's publications. These artistic performances were responsible for the critical demand which in the 1970s made common the use of the term 'performance art', although Dick Higgins' term 'intermedia' and Richard Kostelanetz's 'theatre of mixed means' were proposed before that. Thence, the critical position of Greenberg and Fried or their reductive, disciplinary centering and objecthood were execrated by so-called postmodern art criticism.

Assuming an anti-Greenbergian position, Douglas Crimp states that 'performance becomes just one of a number of ways of "staging" a picture' (1984, 177). Crimp exemplifies the alternate use of 'performance' and 'performance art' to refer mainly to performances of artists in the early 1980s. Craig Owens also criticises Greenberg and Fried to state that postmodern art trespasses aesthetic frontiers and art mediums in a 'confusion of genres, anticipated by Duchamp' (Owens 1984, 209). This anticipation calls attention to Marcel Duchamp's *The Fountain* (1917), a performative questioning of representation in art and its related taxonomies, disciplinary conventions,

institutionalisation and commodification. It is interesting to notice that Duchamp signed his performative sculpture-installation or ready-made work as 'R.Mutt'; 'mutt' is a synonymous to mongrel, crossbreed, hybrid. The retheatricalisation of theatre had also contemporaneous, matching aims.

Although centring their focus on fine arts, studies by Goldberg and Gregory Battcock and Robert Nickas have avoided a tendency to see performance art as exclusively originated in this century or totally created by fine artists. Although attributing the rethinking of the very nature of performance to vanguard artists and musicians, Goldberg again stresses Artaud as radically important in this rethinking. Furthermore, half of the second edition of her first book on performance art approaches theatre from the first decades' theatre vanguards to La Fura's *Accions* and *Suz/o/Suz* in 1986. She has included in her recent publication on performance or live arts (1998), an exclusive chapter on theatre, music and opera, and others on dance, video, rock, the spoken word, the body (ritual, living sculpture, performed photography) and identities (feminism, multiculturalism, sexuality).

Goldberg assumes the almost ubiquitous presence of performance within a kaleidoscopic and multicultural criticism that 'has encouraged a far livelier scholarship that includes cultures well beyond the usual North American and Western European boundaries' (1998, 12). Battcock and Nickas assume similar topics in their 1984 publication on performance. The following juxtaposition of their and other critical articles may represent two perspectives approaching the relationship between performance art and theatre.

This first perspective was/is represented by many theorists and artists who are/were used to refusing the links between performance art and other domains than those of the plastic or fine arts (Burnham 1986; Schneemann 1988 in Nick Kaye 1996; Schimmel 1998). Assumptions linking performance art exclusively to painting or

sculpture cloud the achievements of artists searching for other modes of expressing themselves through free experimentation with available artistic tools and methods.

It is undeniable that there were/are theatrical representations totally devoted to the maintenance of traditional or conventional theatre. They search for the naturalist principle of this art framed by/within aesthetic options that performance art wanted to retreat from. However, these representations could/can not represent *all* theatres.

In a published interview with Nick Kaye, Dennis Oppenheim acknowledges that theatre was also more complex and advanced than performance artists believed in their attacks: 'in the latter sixties, it was a rather simple version of theatre that Body Art wanted not to associate itself with' (1996, 58). Oppenheim unravels a common mistake in not differentiating conventional and other theatres or not acknowledging transformations in theatrical language. Marina Abramovic exemplifies this whilst she recalls to Kaye that 'theatre was an absolute enemy. It was something bad, it was something we should not deal with' (1996, 181). Nevertheless, it seems worth recalling once more that at the end of the nineteenth century, Symbolism was already an example far removed from the exclusive conceptions that Abramovic and other artists had about theatre, a theatre that practitioners were/are also questioning.

Elin Diamond affirms that 'performance came to be defined in opposition to theater structure and conventions. In brief, theater was charged with obeisance to the playwright's authority, with actors disciplined to the referential task of representing fictional entities' (1996, 2). Diamond here reminds us not only of a kind of theatre which many artists and groups have not been practising, but of the continuing opposition between performance art and theatre. She says later that 'without resolving this dialectic, we might observe that if contemporary versions of performance make it the repressed of conventional theater, theater is also the repressed of performance' (1996, 4). Whilst Diamond writes 'conventional theater' in the latter quotation and not

'theater' as in the former one, she makes an important distinction unlike other artists and theorists who may be feeding a conceptual misleading of the first tendency, besides giving a partial history of both performance art and theatre.

On the other hand, there is a second proclivity that would not dissociate performance art from the theatre. This tendency established an opposite but equally fixed hierarchy, within which performance art is 'a new form of theatre, but certainly not a totally new concept in art' (Cee S. Brown 1983, 119). Bonnie Marranca sees performance art as 'a theatrical form with its own set of imperatives' (1984, 144). For Scott Burton, quoted in Douglas Davis' *Post-Performancism*, 'the nature of the performance medium is inherently theatrical [...] In my earlier performances, I used myself conceptually, but when I started using other people, I became aware of being a pseudo-director of a pseudo-theatre' (1981, 33). A more recent example of this second tendency may be found in Fischer-Lichte's analysis of Cage and other artists' '*untitled event*' in 1952 as a redefinition of all the arts, which changed 'into theatre, the performative art *par excellence*' (1997, 25).

What it is fundamental to understand is that both tendencies converge in echoing disciplinary readings of an interdisciplinary art. Both the opposition of performance art and theatre and the ranking down of performance art as a theatrical sub-category seem therefore to persist in a misplaced reading. Another idea may be found in Kaye's analysis of the '*untitled event*'. Kaye also considers it as a watershed for performance art and a move from art into theatre, but he clarifies that

evidently, the entry of performance into art does not, in itself, indicate a turning by artists toward theatre forms or conventions. Indeed, performance in art or performance by artists has invariably arisen in a resistance to the very containment and fixities through which not only the conventional work in art but much theatre and performance would establish itself (1996, 2).

Interdisciplinary intensities supported this resistance to conventions, containment and fixities: performance art, and dance theatre later, progressed not into theatre but into an intermedia or artistically interdisciplinary space towards new, or, other representations, presentations, objects and apprehensions of the changing world.

Langer distrusts artistic marriages because she thinks that 'the distinctions commonly made between painting and music, or poetry and music, or sculpture – are not false, artificial divisions due to a modern passion for pigeonholes, but are founded on empirical and important facts' (1957, 82). For her it implies 'that there can be no hybrid works, belonging as much to one art as to another' (1957, 82). Langer's first argument is not put in question by this study, specially noting that these distinctions have been changing and enlarged. What might be questioned is her distrust of artistic interdisciplinarity which is highlighted by her employment and understanding of 'hybrid'. Dance theatre and *butoh* are not art forms which belong as much to dance or theatre. They may have departed from the pluri- or cross-disciplinarity between theatre and dance but they are new disciplines or domains of art, founded on other 'empirical and important facts', parameters, methods and objects. Dick Higgins argues that Happenings, 'developed as an intermedium, an uncharted land that lies between collage, music and theater. It is not governed by rules; each work determines its own medium and form according to its need' (1978, 17). Gerhard Lischka establishes the same intermedium, but 'in the blurring of art/poetry and life and an artistic transformation (of whatever kind)' (1992, 138). This intermedia space complicates definition and containment.

Abramovic defined to Kaye what she was currently doing in the late 1980s as a 'mix of real performance art and the theatrical', and acknowledges herself 'fascinated by the theatre structure' (1996, 190). She exemplifies other possibilities of theatre beyond her previously mentioned, negative view, exposing a part of an artistically

interdisciplinary expansion of both theatre and performance art. Abramovic approaches Elinor Fuchs' definition of a postmodern theatre.

Elinor Fuchs appears to be one of the first published attempts to delineate and name some of the early 1980s' theatre as 'postmodern theatre'. She describes it as 'a stage turned curiously in upon itself, blurring the old distinctions between self and world, being and thing; and doing so not through a representation of the outside world but through the development of a performance art "about" performance itself' (1983, 2). Her statement is based on the same performance art triggering other theatricalities which in its turn have been indicated as shattering the limits between modernism and postmodernism in art. This so-called postmodern theatre has been characterised by exchanges between theatre and other arts.

In the same year of Fuchs' publication, La Fura's *Accions* appears conspicuously close to her idea of a postmodern theatre. Before approaching this further in distinct ways in chapters 5 and 6, a look at theatre – and other arts – after performance art may continue elaborating further this relationship of postmodern or supermodern performance and theatre, and artistic interdisciplinarity.

It seems contradictory that theatre itself could be untouched by these interdisciplinary conquests moving across its own language. Theatre departments' neglect of performance art's insights into theatrical language was one of the characteristics that Richard Schechner has argued against to propose his 'new' paradigm of performance for theatre studies (1992, 8).²³ Valentina Valentini wondered one year earlier whether a theatre after performance art seemed to present an addition to the 'tradition of new tendencies' in the late twentieth century (1991, 11). In 1989, the main objective of Renato Cohen's *Performance como linguagem (Performance as*

²³ See Schechner (1992).

Language) was to establish the relations between performance art and contemporary theatre (1989, 25). At the beginning of the decade, Timothy Wiles had already proposed in his *The Theatre Event: Modern Theories of Performance* (1980) the acknowledgement of a 'performance theatre'.

Although not as often used as performance art or dance theatre, 'performance theatre' may be considered another term referring to interdisciplinary achievements within the same expansion of practices. 'Performance theatre' was tentatively termed by Timothy Wiles already in 1980 to circumscribe a practice that was no longer encompassed by naturalism or epic theatre. Goldberg uses 'performance-theatre' to approach the scenic work of the Italian *Nuova Specollarita* and *La Fura dels Baus* (1988, 197). Carlson points to the term being used by the *New York Times* and *Village Voice* in their listings, separate from performance, performance art, theatre, dance or film (1996, 4).

Wiles searched for a term that could include a new diversity revealed by a distinct dramaturgy, acting style and formal innovations that had created 'an uncomfortable situation for all the historians of aesthetics' (1980, 112). Natalie Crohn Smitt points out in her review of Wiles' book that performance theatre, 'though somewhat redundant, it is consistent with the now widely accepted term "performance art" and it defines the new theatre in terms of what [...] is the most important aspect of it: its self-conscious emphasis upon the primacy of performance' (1982, 589). Although not acknowledging a new phenomenon in theatre history, Wiles seemed to be suggesting a conciliatory concept to theatrical acts altered after performance art.²⁴

Performance art's shattering of the conservative critical vocabularies of different arts motivated Wiles to acknowledge changes in theatre after the intermedia art form.

²⁴ See Wiles (1980).

Without excluding a canon of literary texts within 'performance theatre', Wiles describes a type of theatre that may dispense 'with words which have no function beyond exposition' (1980, 128). This theatre, continues Wiles, 'presents "narrative" material through pantomime or through an assumption that the audience brings a certain knowledge of the play's plot and conventional meaning with it to the theatre' (1980, 128). Besides that, he stresses that the new practice presents formal innovations arguing 'with Aristotle (or our misassumptions about him) to propose a concept of the theatre event which finds its meaning and being in performance, not in literary encapsulation, the preservation of which has prompted the writing of so many poetics' (1980, 117).

Performance theatre's scope has been amplified by contemporaneous practices. 'Visual theatre', 'physical theatre', 'music theatre', new technologies and creativity demonstrate also the progression of interdisciplinary, artistic performativity within theatre during the last two decades of the twentieth century. The juxtaposition of distinct methods searches other vocabularies and repertoires, expanding interdisciplinary domains visibly established by performance art.

The primacy of the act has been privileged within the wider scope that 'performance' proposes inside and beyond the arts within contemporary supermodernity. Within the capitalist ruling of this contemporaneity, appearance and management of impression may have different interpretations but they have privileged the acknowledgement of a performing self (Featherstone 1991, Connor 1996, MacDonald 1996). These performing selves move across a spreading simulation which took the blurred boundaries between life and art a step further— and is sometimes trivialised and vulgarised by television reality shows (ranging from Jerry Springer to *Big Brother*). Artistic readings or recreations of realities do not ignore this network of performative nuances. Whilst performance progresses in its transformation, artistic interdisciplinarity varies its forms.

The simultaneous flirt with visual and verbal dramaturgies refreshes theatricalities; the artistic appropriation of elements from different disciplines, media and languages has achieved a disorientating speed. The visual or plastic, musical and choreological or performative quotients of theatre are re-evaluated and re-tested. Having been present in both modernity and postmodernity, these interdisciplinary aspects seem to confirm a supermodern theatre, characterised by the acceleration and further visibility of these cross- and interdisciplinary echoes within its contemporaneous diversity.

Mark Gaynor uses the term 'live arts' instead of 'performance' and remarks that 'our activities do not take place in a vacuum' (1988/9, 31). Performance theatre, performance art and dance theatre are other terms which denote pieces in 'to-be-continued' artistic transformations. Challenging categorisations or placements within artistically disciplinary paradigms in distinct parts of the world, their works simultaneously enlarge the borders of each discipline and problematise assured certainties about artistic limits through their appropriation of other expressive media within a distinct one or beyond different ones.

The 1999 sixth edition of the Triple X Event in Amsterdam presented programmes 'which explore and cross boundaries' amongst artistic disciplines, departing from 'multidisciplinary methods'. The performances and artistic works such as Blast Theory (UK), *ex-furero* Marcel·li Antúnez or Noisemaker Fife (Belgium) were selected for transgressing 'borders between theatrical and real events' and for being 'more or less critical statements about contemporary theatre and the current status of the visual arts'.²⁵

²⁵ In *Amsterdam Arts Adventure*, published by the Amsterdam Tourist Office, 1999, p. 39.

It is not surprising that the Art Documenta XI edition in 2002 will have interdisciplinarity as a main theme. Its curator Okwui Enwezor explained in a published interview that

I do not want to play with sub-categories, but I think that one must be open to other activities and proposals. It is neither the case of jumbling everything in the hope of achieving combinations. It is the case of provoking tensions and contradictions amongst the distinct creations, but not ironically or cynically.²⁶

Enwezor seems to recall the difference between a mixture of artistic disciplines and the tensions and contradictions of actions and proposals against disciplinary frontiers present in processes in the arts. He is not worshipping an artistic eclecticism *per se*. Jean François Lyotard states in his *The Postmodern Condition* that 'eclecticism is the degree zero of contemporary culture. [...] This realism of the "anything goes" is in fact that of the money. [...] Such realism accommodates all tendencies, just as capital accommodates all "needs", providing that the tendencies and needs have purchasing power' (1984, 76). Henry Sayre recalls that 'pluralism (and by extension postmodernism) has become confused with a kind of Me-Generation, do-your-own-thing, I'm-OK-you're-OK aesthetics' (1989, xii).

Interdisciplinarity in artistic works happens not only 'in adjustments and accommodations that will permit their work to be more readily accepted by the market; a condition, after all, of simple survival' as indicated by Abigail Solomon-Godeau (1984, 81). There are also artistically interdisciplinary efforts to express the artists' own desires and apprehension of the world, through the available conditions and according to their creative, cognitive, sensitive, ethical and aesthetic decisions. These decisions are taken within an expanded concept of art soaked with interdisciplinary intensities.

²⁶ 'No quiero jugar con categorías estancas, sino que pienso que hay que estar abierto a otras actividades y propuestas. Tampoco es mezclar todo para que se combinen. Se trata de provocar tensiones y contradicciones entre las distintas creaciones, pero no de manera irónica o cínica.' See Catalina Serra, 'Cumbre de los Grandes "Señores" del Arte', *El País*, 14 February 1999, p. 38.

2.3. Afterwords

It is fundamental to avoid a reduction of artistic interdisciplinarity to a simple acknowledgement of an eclecticism within the contemporary arts. Much of this artistic eclecticism may be achieving the supreme values of capitalism but it does not mean it is equivalent to artistic interdisciplinarity. Neither an eclectic mixture *per se* nor a synthesis of the arts can configure performance art or interdisciplinary theatre. Langer points out that theatre 'has so often been described as a synthesis of several or even all arts that its autonomy, its status as a special mode of a great single art, is always in jeopardy' (1953, 321). Georg Fuchs illustrates this issue already in 1909:

we must realise that theatre is not merely an eclectic work of art. It does not attain perfection solely as a synthesis of arts, but as an art in itself. [...] It does not need the other arts in order to exist. [...] But the art of the stage can enrich its rhythms and its forms from the wealth of all other arts [...] under dramatic regulation without forcing them to repudiate the innate principles of their individual arts (1972, 47).

Interdisciplinarity, artistic interdisciplinarity, performance art or theatre are not simplistic sums. It does not mean that simplistic theatre, simplistic ideas of interdisciplinarity as simplistic sums or empty eclecticism cannot exist. They do not question and avoid the habits of magazine readers, the needs of standard industrial imagery by consumers and/or the sensibility of the supermarket shopper which such eclecticism panders to, according to Lyotard (1984, 81). Either being present in performance's potential of resistance or questioning the limits of both this eclecticism and the arts' margins, interdisciplinarity in the arts constitutes much of a challenging continuum. This continuum has been alluded to by some critics in diverse and complementary ways (Sontag 1966; Kostelanetz 1970; Higgins 1978; States 1985; Goldberg 1988, 1998; Cohen 1989; Valentini 1991; Blau 1992; Innes 1993; Sánchez 1994, 1999; Drain 1995; Huxley and Witts 1996, Bernal 1999).

These critics suggest, delineate and/or reiterate a disturbed continuity of cross-fertilisation which has been acknowledged from the historic vanguards, passing through performance art and arriving at 1990s' performance. This continuum implies an acknowledgement of a complex historiographic and theoretical task. Whilst this study decides to chart this continuum through artistic interdisciplinarity and La Fura, José A. Sánchez focuses on a dramaturgy of images to ground his work rescuing a legacy of the historical vanguards. Sánchez sees this heritage of more than a hundred years as neglected by both critics and artists (1999, 13). Valentini named this legacy as a tradition of new tendencies in theatre at the same time, acknowledging the complex task to map this tradition through three questions.

The first question is whether it can be assumed that a tradition of new tendencies has been consolidated in theatre. This seems to be answered in a positive way throughout the 1990s. Valentini's second question wonders how this tradition is manifested. Finally, she asks whether we could anticipate that the historic vanguards have anticipated and been practised within the new vanguards' laboratories (1991, 11-12).

This study selects these questions for several reasons. Firstly, Valentini's questions seem to match the objectives of this research whilst she also inquires about the discontinuous and cumulative transformation of theatrical language through the twentieth century. Secondly, the questions connect distinct moments within which artistic interdisciplinarity is a pivotal presence and stimulus, enhancing the conceptual framework of this thesis. Finally, this thesis believes that La Fura may be able to provide a response to Valentini's questions.

The *lenguaje furero* is also a visible site of theatre to observe the action of the contemporaneous and ever-changing circumstances which frame and are framed by these interdisciplinary operations within and outside performance stages. La Fura's

theatrical productions from *Accions* to *Tier Mon* (1983-1989) seem to unfold specific features that proposed, as the *Natya-Sastra*, a fourfold concept of theatre. These features would configure an artistic interdisciplinarity. The *fureros* achieved a dialectical mutation in their interplay with the different arts and these diagnosed alterations have been stimulating other practices. Those works and earlier productions will orientate the following chapters' attempt to locate how this mutation was manifested. This study sees in La Fura's artistic interdisciplinarity a particular evidence of one of the paths of the diversity which characterises this contemporaneity.

The hypothesis of this thesis is that La Fura has consolidated one of the penultimate moments of the tradition of new theatrical tendencies. This seems to be a reply to Valentini's first question if it is assumed that artistically interdisciplinary processes have permeated this tradition. Drawing on Bert O. States (1985), La Fura's first trilogy appears to have defamiliarised old defamiliarisations in theatre. Therefore, the artistic creations of the *lenguaje furero* might represent one of its penultimate examples within late twentieth century Western theatre. This assumption may be therefore connected to Valentini's second inquiry about how this consolidation is manifested. Comprising the artistically interdisciplinary theatre that this study suggests, the *lenguaje furero* thus provides a field for researching its practical processes in contemporary theatre.

The examination of the first trilogy of the group may provide the reply to Valentini's last question on the possible liaisons of the contemporaneous theatre to the historic and the more recent vanguards that performance art may represent. La Fura's trajectory might be an example of both indirect and direct relationships with these vanguards as well as a penultimate vanguard in theatre.

These relationships are not driven by a cause-effect binarism. This relationship is part of the group's and their members' personal, artistic and cultural heritages and

negotiations with their contemporaneity. Distinct theatres have dissimilar backgrounds which build up different repertoires of traditions drawing from spheres larger than the familiar heritage. Valentini names these repertoires as '*culturas d'adopció*' (cultures of adoption). These are parts of

the tradition of new tendencies in theatre which is composed by a poetic memory that the creator cultivates in relation to a particular vision of the world, expressed in specific artistic and cultural contexts, a poetic memory which passes through the body of the author, being thus intimately assimilated and transformed (1991, 12).²⁷

This poetic memory of an artist is fundamental in the *punctum* achieved by her or him; both poetic memory and *punctum* form each other and are formed throughout the life of an artist.

La Fura's poetic memory has unfolded a particular 'culture of adoption' expressed in the group's theatre. The following chapters examine the cultures of adoption of the ensemble, departing necessarily from the examination of the group's site (Barcelona, Catalonia/Spain) and productions (1979-89). These are connected to the network of interdisciplinarity enlarging its rhizomas through the last decades of the twentieth century. For Mark Gaynor, 'just as feminism now commonly discusses female identity as a social construct and not as innate femininity, so must "Live Artists" be prepared to discuss their identity in a wider social context and not just in terms of what they do' (1988/9, 31). Therefore, the following chapter examines the Castilian/Catalan axis within which the Barcelona-based theatre group developed a visible manifestation of artistic interdisciplinarity, after a first period (1979-83) which will be examined in chapter 4.

Interdisciplinary theatre is woven within and reacts to an ever-changing web which alters and re-alter artistic, scientific and everyday performatives in a mutual

²⁷ 'La tradició del teatre nou és feta de *memòria poètica* que l'autor cultiva en relació amb una particular visió del món expressada en determinats contextos artístics i culturals, una memòria poètica que passa a través del cos de l'autor i que, per tant és íntimament assimilada i transformada.'

exchange. The crisis of categorisation in both scientific and artistic works have forced a rethinking of limits for artists, theorists and scientists. The next five chapters attempt to collaborate in this re-charting effort through the investigation of the artistic interdisciplinarity in La Fura dels Baus's theatre from 1979 to 1989.

In a published interview with Nick Kaye, Dennis Oppenheim suggests that a possible imbalance between the practical performances of artists and their discourses systematising their works may be a question of some practitioners' prioritisation (1996, 71). He draws attention to the fact that

just because these things are difficult for the artists to talk about doesn't mean that they are difficult to talk about. I think it's simply a question of the practitioners' hierarchy of use of energy. [...] But I do know that there is this region that seems to defy language (1996, 71-2).

Defying this region mentioned by Oppenheim, artistic interdisciplinarity and La Fura are brought together in this thesis as other tools to read, analyse and create theatre.

CHAPTER 3

THE CATALAN/SPANISH AXIS AND *EL TEATRO INDEPENDIENTE*

Introduction

The need for an exploration of a wider social context and the cultures of adoption mentioned at the end of the previous chapter by Mark Gaynor and Valentina Valentini respectively¹ is crucial to any discussion of La Fura dels Baus. The company came together in 1979, during the democratic transition which transformed both Catalonia and Spain after Franco's death on 20 November 1975. The end of the dictatorship was superseded by a progressive return of civil rights in a social, cultural and economic renaissance which flourished in the country between 1976 and 1982.

According to Jo Labanyi, the post-1975 period was marked by an atmosphere of 'political and sexual liberation [which] was a replay of a May 1968 not experienced at the time; and overnight the public was exposed to the whole backlog of previously banned works by foreign and Spanish exile writers and film-makers' (1995, 398). For Catalonia, the moment also meant an important chance to recover its national identity, claim more autonomy and reconstruct the cultural infrastructure that was built up during the previous century and had been dismantled by Franco's regime.

The 1978 Constitution may have opened some space for the autonomous rights of the Spanish regions and nations, but it also simultaneously blocked any attempt against the sovereignty of the indissoluble Spanish State. The constitutional barriers have not, however, obstructed an intense discussion on nationalism within Spain. Although the Basques' claims dominate the media with ETA as a differential factor,

¹ See page 113 of this study.

Catalans and Galicians have different strategies but similar objectives against Madrid's centralism.

Eric Hobsbawn states that 'there are no foreseeable limits to the further advance of national separatism, [...which is still] a vector of historical change' (1997, 69). He also suggests that circling round nations and nationalism, 'the owl of Minerva which brings wisdom, said Hegel, flies out at dusk' (1997, 79). If this is valid for several parts in the world, as the late 1980s and 1990s have revealed, Catalonia is not an exception.

There is a concrete but suspended reality in Catalonia which confuses definitive interpretations. Although the history of this nation is marked by a resistance against unionist imposition, the demographic tissue in Catalonia and the broken consensus regarding what it means 'to be Catalan' blur the definition of a Spanish 'other'.² Within the new geopolitical organisation of Europe and the globalising tendencies of liberal capitalism, the economic strength of Catalonia, may be used by separatists or *españolistas*. To indicate a clear conclusion is to enter the terrain of impossibility. Within the political games and pacts where nationalism and autonomy are key words, the 1978 Constitution, elaborated one year before La Fura began performing, is exposed as a significant – and untouchable - weapon of Madrid and its centripetal forces.

This chapter re-introduces the delicate meanderings of regional and national identities operating within the Spanish State adumbrated in the general introduction to this thesis.³ The troubled and entwined histories of Catalonia and Spain demand further examination of the opposing forces which have been operating towards distinct objectives for centuries. These forces should not be ignored in the analysis of artistic

² The broken consensus about nationality is not exclusively Catalan. On 'identity' see Castells (1997). On Catalan identities, see special editions of *Critiques of Anthropology*, 10.2 and 3, (1990), dedicated to the subject.

³ See pages 35 to 37 of this study.

and cultural production in Catalonia precisely because art does not happen in either a historical or an aesthetic void.

Although supermodernity accentuates the global implications in any artistic product in the late twentieth century, this thesis examines La Fura's style of playing as connected to the modes of being in Catalonia, and Spain. Both text and context or content and form are mutually constitutive. Similarly, postmodernity in Catalonia cannot be dissociated from postmodern Spain. This set of interconnections constitutes what the general introduction described as the Catalan/Castilian axis, within which La Fura's works were/are developed. This axis is inserted within a historical complexity which goes beyond the limits of this thesis. Nevertheless, this chapter attempts to select some aspects of this axis in the hope of providing the reader with an idea, or one reading, for the siting of La Fura.

The first section of this chapter seeks to highlight the awareness and sense of Catalan national identity before the 1960s. It outlines the political history of the emergence of Catalanism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a way of framing the political tensions in the first decades of the Franco era. It is also a framework that may aid in selecting some moments directly related to both the Catalan national identity and the basis of contemporary Catalan theatre as well as a particular branch of Catalan performance theatre which has emerged over the past thirty years.

The second section reverts the perspective to examine the Castilian/Catalan axis from the 1960s until the late 1970s. It is the investigation of the *Teatro Independiente* (1960-80) which will orientate the search of the focus of this chapter. While the political implications of the Catalan/Castilian axis are crucial to an understanding of La Fura's works, this chapter will centre its exploration on an examination of innovative theatrical practices in the period 1960-80. Theatre transformation in Spain, and Catalonia, reached a decisive point in the TI. This Spanish movement and/or period was

responsible for creating new audiences and alternative spaces, and led to an increased professionalism and the forging of new theatrical methodologies in Spain.⁴ TI went against the mediocrity and escapism surrounding the official bourgeois theatre and above all, functioned as a statement against Francoist ideology (1936-75).⁵ Therefore, this second section is not a transgression of the Castilian/Catalan axis. The section bears in mind the nation-wide significance of the movement against the Franco dictatorship, but the *Teatro Independiente's* Catalan manifestations constituted a prominent front of nationalist and cultural resistance against the renewed attempts to oppress regional identities through the imposition of an exclusive Spanish identity.⁶

A representative company from the first generation of the TI, Madrid's Tábano (formed in 1968) suggested that 'the TI cannot be understood outside the social and political context of Spain, within which the TI was an alternative to the established theatre, an aesthetic, political and cultural alternative' (in Torres 1987, 381).⁷ Nevertheless, the TI cannot be dissociated from the international shattering of societal and cultural values and a generational transformation which reached a climax in the late 1960s. TI is for instance, quite close to the cultural ambitions of a similar fringe

⁴ Different authors acknowledge the origins of the TI in distinct and complementary manners (Pérez d'Olager 1970; Miralles 1977; Fàbregas 1978; Torres 1987; Oliva 1989; Saumell 1996). Although it is difficult to precisely fix the beginning of the common use of the term, Saumell (1996) indicates that it was definitively adopted at the 1965 Festival de Teatro Actual in Cordoba, pointing out Joan Brossa's *Accions* and the foundation of Els Joglars in 1962 as earlier formative moments. Torres' book reveals that the first *Festival de Teatro Contemporaneo* in Gijón proposed the creation of an *Asociación Independiente de Teatros Experimentales* in 1963 (1987, 31) and that Feliu Formosa uses the term in 1964, referring to groups such as '*Associació Dramàtica de Barcelona, Teatro Experimental Català, etc*' (1987, 37). It seems interesting to note here that Ignasi Iglésias, Pere Coromines and Jaume Brossa created a group they called *Teatre Independent*, in 1896 (Fàbregas 1978, 183).

⁵ On Spanish theatre under the Francoist repression see Doménech in *Escenarios* (1988). On Catalan theatre during the Francoist period see Gallén, and Sirera, in George and London (1996) or Abellán, and Benach in *Escenarios* (1988). Oliva (1989) examines Spanish theatre since the beginning of the Civil War. London (1997) approaches the period 1939-63, focusing on the reception of foreign plays in Spain. For an overall view on Catalan theatre until 1977 see Fàbregas (1978). Delgado (1998) edited an overview of the period 1920-95, centred on production history rather than dramatic works.

⁶ See Labanyi (1995).

⁷ 'El fenómeno del Teatro Independiente no es comprensible fuera del contexto social y político español [...y] en nuestro país, el Teatro Independiente es una alternativa al teatro establecido, una alternativa estética, política y cultural.'

movement in Great Britain. For Baz Kershaw, alternative theatre in Britain 'aimed to alter radically the whole structure of British theatre', providing 'a fundamental modification in the cultural life of the nation' (1992, 17-8). After comparing the characteristics of alternative theatre in Italy, France and Spain in 1972, Xavier Fábregas acknowledges shared features (in Torres 1987, 181). As in Argentina, Brazil and other countries of Latin America, the dictatorship in Spain marked a differentiating and propelling factor. Nevertheless, in all these countries, theatre was being questioned and transformed away from a focus on the staging of conventional dramatic literature.

Angel Fernández-Santos questions the overwhelming self-classification of independent theatre in Spain that 'in the majority of cases, it was nothing more than a provisional label towards a pure and simple "dependence" on the either commercial or official theatre' (in Torres 1987, 76).⁸ Albert Miralles points out in 1977 that 'today it is difficult to say who is independent and who is not in Barcelona' (1977, 137).⁹ Moisés Pérez Coterillo also questions the unity of the TI, indicating a constant crisis of identity and describing the movement as 'an inarticulate and disperse one, not open to collective confrontations [... within] an atomised theatrical activity' (in Torres 1987, 359).¹⁰ Nevertheless, despite the schisms which beset the movement, the term *Teatro Independiente* is undoubtedly used to describe a significant part of the experimental and alternative theatre in Spain and Catalonia from the early 1960s to 1980.¹¹

Both the movement and the ferocious censorship of Francoism were nationwide. The fight against Franco was a common denominator for many Catalan and

⁸ 'En multitud de casos, [...] era nada más que una etiqueta provisional con fines de [...] la "dependencia" pura y simple, bien del comercio del teatro o bien de la oficialidad del teatro.'

⁹ 'Hoy ya es difícil, en Barcelona, decir quién es independiente y quién no.'

¹⁰ 'Un movimiento balbuciente, disperso y poco dado a confrontaciones colectivas [...] una dispersa y atomizada actividad teatral.'

¹¹ One of the most valuable publications on the *Teatro Independiente* was the volume edited by Torres (1987). For an introduction on the nation-wide TI see Saumell (1996, 1998) and Erven's ninth chapter (1988). On the Catalan TI see see Fábregas' thirteenth chapter (1978).

Spanish TI artists. The second section of this chapter eschews an examination of TI as a nation-wide movement in favour of a focus on the alternative phenomenon in Barcelona, the home site of the *fureros*. The departure from verbal theatre was a strong characteristic of alternative, experimental or radical theatre practice in Spain, motivated by a political wish to achieve freer expression and communication. Additionally, in the Catalan capital and provinces, the recurrence of an image and movement based theatre also echoed a protest against the prohibition of the language, a significant part of the systematic cultural genocide against a Catalan identity.¹²

TI was fundamental in defining the other parameters of a theatrical language within which La Fura worked. La Fura (formed in 1979) or Sèmola Teatre (1978), El Tricicle (1979) and La Cubana (1980) are part of a second Catalan generation which pushed further the artistic boundaries broken up by the first generation of the TI. This first generation is represented by, amongst others, Els Joglars (founded in 1962), Grup d'Estudis d'Horta (1967), Ca Barret (1968), Els Comediants (1971) and Dagoll Dagom (1974).¹³ Artistically cross-disciplinary nuances also permeated Els Joglars and Els Comediants' alteration of theatrical parameters in Catalonia. The parameters conquered by the first generation and especially these two companies comprise the focus of the second section of this chapter.

This second section opts for closing its focus on these changes through Els Joglars and Els Comediants for several reasons. Perhaps, most importantly, it is because the productions of these collectives formed in Barcelona are impregnated with artistic interdisciplinary nuances. Els Joglars reflects the TI activities from its formation in the

¹² On 9 December 1948, the United Nations' assembly proposed a definition for 'genocide'. The USSR's delegation proposed a complementation to that definition, including any act intended to prohibit or destroy the language, religion or culture of a national, racial or religious group. See 'Prefaci', in L'Institut Català d'Estudis Politics, (1973). On Francoist repression in Catalonia see L'Institut Català d'Estudis Politics (1973) or Benet (1978).

¹³ See Saumell (1996, 1998).

early 1960s to its official dissolution in 1980. In addition, both Els Joglars and Els Comediants are still operating, touring their work across different continents. As posited by George and London, it is groups such as 'Els Joglars, Comediants and La Fura dels Baus which have come to represent Catalan theatre beyond Catalonia' (1996, 15). Significantly, both Els Joglars and Els Comediants are declared influences for La Fura's early productions which were developed within the theatrical patterns established by the former groups.¹⁴ Finally, this examination of the changes pioneered by both groups continues the investigation of the tensions between Spain and Catalonia and a wider social context within which La Fura is inserted.

The third section of this chapter investigates the theatrical and political landscapes within the post-Francoist transition towards democracy, which preceded and encompassed both La Fura's inception in 1979 and new mutations of the Castilian/Catalan axis. This chapter takes a more descriptive turn to examine and inform the reader of the histories of this axis. In 1991, Baltasar Porcel writes that 'most Catalans become separatists whenever they are forced to be unionists' (1991, 94). In 1999, Josep Carreras states that 'the more as I am allowed to be a Catalan, the more Spanish I feel.'¹⁵ Both artists disclose that the delicate meanderings involving the Castilian/Catalan axis continue to this time. This chapter, therefore, is part of a wider siting of La Fura that this thesis aims to unfold in the hope of investigating artistic interdisciplinarity in theatre, through the either (or both) Catalan or (and) Spanish ensemble.

¹⁴ In their unpublished interviews with the author, the *fureros* acknowledged an influence of both companies in their early productions. See Fondevilla (1988) or Maritza Jimenez, 'No nos interesa la trascendencia', *El Nacional*, Caracas, 30 May 1988, p. 26

¹⁵ 'Cuando más catalán me dejan ser, más español me siento'. The words of Carreras were broadcast in an interview to Pedro Ruiz on TVE 2's programme *La Noche Abierta*, 20 January 1999. It is interesting that the famous tenor is more known internationally as José Carreras. This *españolisation* of name is also undertaken by some of the *fureros* (Carles [Carlos] Padrís or Pere Tantinyà [Pera Tantiña]), indicating an echo of Francoist mechanisms of normalisation.

3.1. The Catalonia/Spain Axis

'Catalonia is a nation and it has this right even if it is acknowledged or not. Spain is not a nation.'
Catalan President Jordi Pujol, 8 October 1998.¹⁶

Regionalism, nationalism, nation and national identities are baffling terms. Discussing the two first terms, Enric Ucelay da Cal states that regionalisms are the ideologies and movements 'which affirm local identity but accept some sense of common statehood' and nationalisms the ones 'which aspire at least in theory to achieve independence' (1995, 32). Manuel Castells defines nations as 'cultural communes constructed in people's minds and collective memory by the sharing of history and political projects' (1997, 51). Sarah Radcliff and Sallie Westwood point out that 'a relatively coherent ideology – nationalism – can be distinguished from the civic and territorial aspect of the nation, and the lived imaginaries of subjects, that is national identities' (1996, 15). This chapter will consider such definitions without discarding other variables.¹⁷

Frantz Fanon has asserted that negotiation with the depersonalising coloniser should only begin after independence has been gained, a fundamental way to reverse the master/slave recognition and colonial castration.¹⁸ In 'On National Culture' (1990), he posits that

the conscious and organized undertaking by a colonized people to re-establish the sovereignty of the nation constitutes the most complete and obvious cultural manifestation that exists. [...] After the conflict there is not only the disappearance of colonialism but also the disappearance of the colonized man (1990, 197-8).

Within his approach to nationalism, Fanon sees culture as 'the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify and praise the action

¹⁶ 'Cataluña es una nación y tiene ese derecho tanto si se le reconoce como o si no. España no es una nación'). The majority of the Spanish newspapers published his declaration in the following day.

¹⁷ On nationalism see Guibernau and Rex (1997). For an introduction on nationalisms in Spain see Ucelay da Cal (1995, 1995b) and Elorza (1995).

¹⁸ See Isaac Julien's film, *Franz Fanon: Black Skin, White Mask*, broadcast on BBC 2, 16 December 1995 for an introduction to Fanon.

through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence' (1990, 180). 'To fight for national culture', continues Fanon, 'means in the first place to fight for the liberation of the nation, that material keystone which makes the building of culture possible' (1990, 187).¹⁹ Nevertheless, cultural resistance, nationalist fights and negotiations have been also pursued within other parameters.

Eric Hobsbawn suggests that "nation" and "nationalism" are no longer adequate terms to describe, let alone to analyse, the political entities described as such, or even the sentiments once described by these words' (1997, 79). Castells quotes ex-president Prat de la Riba's *La Nacionalitat Catalana* (1906) to discuss what he selects as the historic innovation of a nationalism which could dispense with independence:

the State must be fundamentally differentiated from the Nation because the State is a political organization, an independent power externally, a supreme power internally, with material forces in manpower and money to maintain its independence and authority. We cannot identify the one with the other, as it was usual, even by Catalan patriots themselves who were speaking or writing of a Catalan nation in the sense of an independent Catalan state... Catalunya continued to be Catalunya after centuries of having lost its self-government. Thus, we have reached a clear, distinct idea of nationality, the concept of a primary, fundamental social unit, destined to be in the world society, in Humanity, what man is for the civil society (1997, 42-3).

Within these ideas of nationality, Catalonia has been described as an example of a postmodern 'nation without a state' like the Basque Country, Quebec, Canada or Scotland (Keating 1996; Castells 1997; Guibernau 1997).²⁰ Castells recalls that the disintegration of pluri-national states is one of the features of our contemporaneity, which witnesses 'the development of nations that stop at the threshold of statehood, but force their parent state to adapt, and cede sovereignty. [...] They are not fully fledged states, but win a share of political autonomy on the basis of their national identity' (1997, 52).

¹⁹ See 'On National Culture' in Fanon (1990).

²⁰ Keating (1996) presents a comparative study of nationalism in Catalonia, Quebec and Scotland.

The economic power of Catalonia has always been a significant reason for the Spanish State's interests. Going back in history, Josep R. Llobera reminds us that 'while Catalonia was a feudal society, Castile was essentially a warfaring society' (1990, 7).²¹ In addition to that, Catalonia was 'the first and only area within the Iberian peninsula to develop an early bourgeoisie and to have effected the transition to capitalism at approximately the same time as other Western European countries' (1990, 7-8).

The industrial revolution was a failure in Spain and a successful reality in the Catalan nation by the end of the eighteenth century. Castells states that for more than a century, Catalonia was 'the only truly industrial area of Spain' (1997, 45). Llobera points to this as one main differentiating factor between both sites and 'perhaps one of the most important foundations for the development of the national question in Catalonia' (1990, 7-8). Castells adds that this economical potency did not have a corresponding political strength until the nineteenth century; this was triggered by threatening trade policies from Madrid and a strong Catalan nationalist movement, inspired by ideologues, poets, historians and philologists who celebrated their own language, history and national identity (1997, 45). Nevertheless, Llobera suggests that

the awareness of Catalan identity, established on the basis of a distinctive culture, history and language, among other features, was not a phenomenon unknown prior to the second half of the nineteenth century, but it manifested itself with vigour first culturally [in the Catalan *Reinaxença*] and then politically, only in this period. In fact, Pierre Vilar has maintained that medieval Catalonia is perhaps the polity to which the label nation-state can be applied least anachronistically amongst European countries. By the mid-thirteenth century, the first solid manifestations of national consciousness can be observed (1990, 7-8).

The *Reinaxença* was framed by Romanticism and, as argued by David George and John London, rescued the Catalan language from its 'virtual patois status' (1996, 11).²² Both

²¹ For an introduction to Catalan history, see Sobrer (1992). For an overall view see Vilar (1988) and Esteves (1998).

²² On the Catalan language, see Coromines (1982).

authors also suggest that the basis of contemporary Catalan theatre was laid in the mid-nineteenth century movement:

a renewed sense of Catalan national identity, coinciding with the growth of an independent-minded liberal bourgeoisie, was reflected in the building of new theatres and other cultural and entertainment centres in Barcelona. The Liceu Theatre was transferred to its new premises in the Rambla in 1847, and the Odeon and the Olimpo were inaugurated in the 1850s. The Romea Theatre, which was to become the home of Catalan drama, was opened in 1863 (1996, 11).²³

The cultural movements or processes of the *Renaixença*, and the following *Modernisme* and *Noucentisme* succeeded each other at the cross of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.²⁴ They 'provided the raw material and the driving force for the political movement known as Catalanism' (Hooper 1995, 411).²⁵

The first decade of the twentieth century witnessed the definition of three rival projects in Catalan politics: Spanish nationalism, Catalanism and a revolutionary working-class movement. There were radical democrats and populists in the first corner, liberal professionals, lawyers and doctors in the second, and anarcho-syndicalists in the third. Ucelay da Cal points out that 'their appeal on the promise of jobs for a clientele of new immigrants' was a common feature amongst the three groups (1995, 147).²⁶

This emergent Catalanism was responsible for the creation in 1913 of an organ of administrative self-government, the *Mancomunitat*. This partially autonomous

²³ George and London point out that also in the 1860s, Catalan theatre had consolidated the success of Frederic Soler, artistically named Serafi Pitarra (1839-1895): 'Pitarra used dramatic forms such as the *sainet*, a one-act, humorous, often satirical piece traditionally performed after the main play' (1996, 11). He was later acknowledged as a conservative Romantic author of the *Reinaxença*, whilst 'Àngel Guimerà (1845-1924) arguably the most popular Catalan dramatist of all time has a more serious tone. [...] Guimerà's plays contains an element of realism, but Romanticism is still the prevailing mode' (1996, 12).

²⁴ On these three Catalan cultural movements see Terry (1995), and Frenk, Perrian and Thompson (1995). Fàbregas cover these movements in theatre in his chapters 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 (1978)

²⁵ On Catalan nationalism see Masgrau (1992). For an overview see Balcells (1992).

²⁶ This feature discloses that immigration had a first great wave before the 1920s and the 1950s, stimulated respectively by Primo de Rivera and Francisco Franco. In both dictators' systematised efforts to dissolve the Catalan sense of identity, the non-Catalan speaking population might weaken the strong fundament of nationalism and identity that the Catalan language signified. Immigrants brought their own tensions and uncertainties to those present in Catalonia.

administration financed the Escola Catalana d'Art Dramàtic (ECAD, Catalan School of Dramatic Art) founded also in 1913 by Adrià Gual - a Catalan Symbolist influenced by Paris's Théâtre d'Art. This connection with the international historical vanguards may be exemplified by Ramón Pérez de Ayala's article *La reteatralización* (1915): he includes Spain within an international, long standing, 'conceptual and evolutionary crisis with an equivocal concept of the theatrical art as literature and dramatic art' (in Sánchez 1999b, 427).²⁷

A series of conflicting coalitions amongst those three political projects of the first decade could not prevent Primo de Rivera's coup or confront his dictatorship (1923-1930). The *españolización* of Catalonia took off again. An example of this 'Spanishification' of Catalan theatre is seen in the fact that the school had its name changed to 'Instituto del Teatro Nacional' (National Institute of Theatre). 'National' here referring to the Spanish State, as stressed by Xavier Fàbregas (1978, 221).

After the political confusion detonated by the military dictatorship of Primo de Rivera, 'a new generation of radical nationalist offices and shop-workers helped Catalanism lose its long-standing conservative, even clerical, tone' (Ucelay da Cal 1995b, 148). Cal exemplifies the new generation with the

unusual populist coalition, which joined urban and rural republicans and radical nationalists [nationalists, immigrants-dominated industrial unionism of anarcho-syndicalists, left republicans and peasants], the *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (ERC) [Republican Left of Catalonia] which would dominate Catalan politics through to the civil war (1995b, 148).

A new pact with Madrid promised home-rule status to Catalans in 1931.²⁸ Catalan separatists proposed a Republic of Catalonia within an 'Iberian Federation' in the same year. In 1932, another pact promising greater autonomy restored the Generalitat: the

²⁷ 'El arte teatral está por todo el mundo en crisis desde hace tiempo. [...] Crisis de concepto y evolución, errado concepto de arte teatral, como literatura y arte dramático.' Sánchez's last chapter (1999b) presents a historical perspective of different views of this crisis within the first third of last century in Spain, including texts of Adrià Gual, Valle Inclán, Rivas Cheriff and Max Aub.

²⁸ For an overview of the period 1898-31 in Spain, see the first part of Graham and Labanyi (1995).

Statute of Autonomy was approved by the Spanish government, 'under popular pressure expressed in referendum' (Castells 1997, 46).²⁹ Autonomy was again restricted: Catalans could then control health and welfare but not education and economy. In 1934, the new president of the Catalan autonomy, labour lawyer Lluís Companys, proclaimed the Catalan State of an again, non-existent, Spanish Federal Republic. The Spanish State declared war on the new government of Catalonia which surrendered after the bombardment ordered by the – Catalan – general Batet and the Civil Governor of Barcelona against the offices of the Generalitat and the City Hall.

The Spanish parliament then suspended the Catalan government. The defeated members of the Generalitat were condemned to thirty years in prison. They were, however, given amnesty by the elected Popular Front government in 1936. Autonomy was then restored and the Generalitat gained much of what it had been denied between 1932 and 1934 (Hooper 1995, 412-13). Both events triggered the outbreak of the Civil War in 1936.

The Civil War was the prologue to a dictatorship which remained in power for almost forty years. The conflict had the internally fragmented republicans (syndicalists, socialists, communists and anarchists) defending the elected government against the fascist rebels who 'were also politically divided, but [...] united in their conviction that the republic had to be destroyed' (Arango 1985, 67). Supporting the insurgents were the hierarchies of the military and church, the great landowners, the aristocrats, the right-wing Falange and their business and power interests.³⁰ The centralist power of the fascists was engaged in fronts outside Catalonia, and 'before Barcelona was defeated in

²⁹ The name 'Generalitat' was chosen in homage of the thirteenth century committee set up by the Catalan-Aragonese parliament, with twenty-four members, representatives of the nobility, the bourgeoisie and the clergy. The Catalan-Aragonese Generalitat was responsible for collecting and then deciding how to spend the taxes, characterising what 'was arguably the world's first parliamentary government', as argued by Hooper (1995, 409).

³⁰ For an introduction to the Civil War, see Arango (1985).

1939, Catalonia functioned almost as an independent state' (Keating 1996, 120). Nevertheless, after the defeat of the Catalan capital, the Gestapo arrested Companys in Paris in 1940 and repatriated him to Spain where he was shot that same year after a brief 'trial'. After the victory and throughout the 1940s, the fascist cause attacked any attempts made on behalf of nationalism or regional separatism against an idealised Spanish unity.

Francoists defined themselves as 'Spanish nationalists' against the main enemy as they saw the 'regionalists'. This appropriation implied a national – and only – Spanish statehood and identity. This treatment also negated the independentist aim of the nationalist movements within Spain. Francoists used to employ the same reductionism against the Catalan, Basque and Galician languages, renaming them as 'dialects'. These three languages were forbidden outside the intimacy of the family as early as December 1939.

Francoism had to change this prohibition after the Allies' victory in 1945 and the 1946 United Nations boycott against Spain. Despite this and the fact that the Teatre Romea functioned as a resistance focus for Catalan theatre, the prohibition had a direct consequence for Catalan playwrights. Rodolfo Sirera argues that for nearly two decades after 1946, 'innovation in playwriting was put aside', and 'no generation of realist dramatists emerged in Catalonia, in contrast with contemporary Castilian theatre, where dramatists of the stature of Antonio Buejo Vallejo (b.1916 [-2000]) and Alfonso Sastre (b. 1926) were leaders in the genre' (1996, 43-4).

In the 1950s, the increasing economic and political anachronism of the country obliged Franco to permit other changes in his retrograde and xenophobic strategies. These changes aimed to attract economical help from the country's European neighbours and the United States who boasted a more democratic and more industrially developed capitalist culture. North-American help came as a means for the USA to

defend its interests in military bases in Spain, within the Cold War years. According to Antonio Arango, the USA 'came shopping with enormous resources in hand. [...] The Americans needed Franco more than he needed them (or at least that is the convincing pose that the *generalísimo* maintained), and they paid dearly, \$225 million for starters' (1985, 79). Spain then had the funds to try rebuilding its economy, creating a useful alliance with the Western powers in the process.

The UN boycott was lifted in 1950. Spain was admitted to the UN in 1955 and the International Monetary Fund in 1958. The Plano de Estabilización (Stabilisation Plan), begun in 1959, was accompanied by an economic expansion which marked a continuous softening of the isolationist and repressive regime, manifest especially through a dependency on the tourism boom and foreign investments. In the 1960s, Spain witnessed what Jo Labanyi describes as a process of 'vertiginous economic take-off and modernization' (1995, 398). Michael Keating points out that 'the opening to Europe, a gradual dismantling of protectionism and currency convertibility' allowed for the economic development of the 1960s to lower the Francoist discrimination against Catalonia in state investments and enterprises (1996, 151).

Catalonia was one of the main focuses of opposition against Franco's regime during its first two decades. Although cultural resistance continued, a two year campaign for the establishment of Catalan as the official language was adjourned in 1963. The regionalists, as a political group, were growing in the early 1960s and the return of autonomy was insistently demanded. Against this demand, Franco unleashed repression so severe that native languages were then forbidden even within the intimacy of the family; Castilian should be the only language spoken, written or performed in Spain.

Llobera summarises that

the history of Francoism in Catalonia is first and foremost the history of the survival of a diffused and contracted Catalan identity and then, in the 1950s, of the progressive consolidation of such identity, fundamentally at the cultural and linguistic levels, but also with a political dimension. After 1959, the political element became more apparent only to explode after Franco's death (1991, 17).

After 1959 and until Franco's death, a main focus of nationalism's resistance and cultural opposition was the alternative and vanguard theatre movement which achieved visibility as *Teatro Independiente* (TI) (Torres 1987; Erven 1988; Saumell 1996, 1998).

Eugène van Erven points out that 'apart from ETA's spectacular actions and the often brutally dispersed student demonstrations, the most consistent anti-Franco resistance developed in the cultural field' (1988, 146). For him, the TI was 'instrumental in creating ever larger spaces of freedom in Spain, during the final decade of the Franco dictatorship and immediately following it, in the crucial transition period from November 1975 until 1982' (1988, 147).³¹

Fàbregas points out that in 1968 the statement that there was no affection towards theatre in Barcelona was insistently repeated by critics and artists in Spain, although the Catalan TI had already achieved a visible maturity in Barcelona and in the provinces (1976, 9-17). Whilst he argues that the statement should be complemented to state that 'in Barcelona there is no affection towards the theatre practised in Madrid' (1976, 9), Fabregas seems to outline both the nationalist tensions present in theatre and the changes occurring in the theatrical language within Catalonia during the 1960s. It is possible to select three interdependent alterations in the theatrical language propelled by the TI's first generation which were influential for the creative processes of the second. The first trait was a move in theatrical language towards unwritten dramaturgies which characterised a significant part of the movement, as well as the

³¹ The *Nova Cançó* (New Song) movement should not be forgotten: singers like Joan Manuel Serrat, Lluís Llach and Raimon sang in Catalan and challenged the Francoist prohibition of the language, performing in La Cova del Drac in Barcelona where Els Joglars, Companya de Màrius Cabré, Albert Caterina, Grup Teatre Independent del CICF, Ca Barret and other TI groups performed throughout the 1960s and 1970s.

artistic cross-disciplinarity within it. The second change concerned the methodological and organisational features of the TI groups. Finally, the third alteration was related to both theatrical space and the relationship with audiences.

These three changes are permeated by the appropriation of elements from Catalan cultural traditions and/or *fiestas* (*festes* in Catalan).³² This appropriation may be related to artistic cross-disciplinarity and the employment of extra-theatrical sources to rejuvenate the art of theatre within changing times and against mainstream practice. These were visible features of the historical vanguards in the early decades of the twentieth century. The international alternative theatre of the 1960s and 1970s added distinct characteristics to these features. These traits are separated out from each other in the following section to facilitate their investigation but they must be seen as mutually constitutive.

3.2. The Catalan TI and the Performance Theatre of Els Joglars and Els Comediants

Censorship and the centralising aims of the Francoist dictatorship conspicuously constrained theatrical practices within Spain. The censoring bodies were keen to punish any attempt against the regime, the Roman Catholic church and the army or any allusion to the Civil War, as opposed to ‘the Crusade’ which is how the regime referred to the fratricidal conflict (Graham and Labanyi 1995). The censors had the legal power to enforce any decision which would keep their moralistic and fascist patterns of ‘acceptable’ behaviour.³³

In an unpublished interview with the author, *furero* Pep Gatell recalls the existence of double versions of plays submitted for approval to the censorship

³² This thesis will employ the term *fiesta*, although keeping the Catalan *fiesta* or *festes* when quoted.

³³ On Spanish censorship see O’Connor (1966, 1969).

committees. One version was presented in the dress rehearsal for the censors and a second one was performed if actors or friends, who were keeping watch, stated that there was not a censor in the audience that evening.³⁴ Also in an unpublished interview with the author, Ricard Salvat recollects that censorship would vary from city to city, depending on the personal characteristics of each censor, but the constant toughness in the oppressive work of the censors provoked a self-censorship in the creative processes and works of many artists.³⁵ On the other hand, Els Joglars is a visible example of the fact that censorship motivated other artistic performatives which privileged an 'unwritten' theatre.

This form of theatre could escape the censors' moralist, authoritarian and fascist rules which involved the reading, cutting and sometimes even the prohibition of written texts. The physical, musical and visual aspects of theatre were privileged to the detriment of a verbal predominance, which was more easily prey to the censor's control. In a published interview with Eugène van Erven, Albert Boadella, director of Els Joglars (founded in 1962) explains the group's use of a silent theatre which merged mime, physicality, body language, choreography and visual metaphors:

no one had ever done this type of theatre before in Spain, and therefore the censors did not quite know how to handle it. After long deliberations, they finally decided to subject it to the same censorship criteria that they applied to circuses and variety shows, criteria more concerned with how decently the performers were dressed than with politics (1988, 159).

These strategies against censorship were stressed by Els Joglars as a political action that questioned the repression of Catalan, seeking a theatrical language that escaped the political association with Castilian and Franco.³⁶ Nevertheless, the aesthetic option for music-, movement- and/or image-based works in different parts of the world, prevalent

³⁴ Unpublished interview with the author, Barcelona, 29 April 1998.

³⁵ Unpublished interview with the author, London, 29 January 1998.

³⁶ For an introduction to Els Joglars, see Rognoni (1987) and Feldman (1998b). Berenguer (1983), Cabal and Santos (1985) and Lane (1996) present interviews with Boadella.

since the 1960s cannot be restricted to the political motivations of Catalan and Spanish theatre artists such as Boadella. In the late 1960s, Richard Kostelanetz claimed that 'the new theatre contributes to the contemporary cultural revolt against the pre-dominance of the word; for it is definitively a theater for a post-literate (which is not the same as illiterate) age' (1970, 3).

It is known that the alternative theatre movements of the 1960s and 1970s questioned again the naturalist, literary and psychological predominance in theatre as well as traditional methods and training in the delivery of their performance texts. Recreating, distorting or criticising this post-literate age, the sensorial was enhanced through an increasing privileging of the physicality of the present, sentient body (positioned even closer to the body of the spectator) and the cross-examination of different arts, popular culture and expressive means. Alternative theatre was both provoking and re-charting its disciplinary limits towards a theatrical language which could directly respond to the changing climate.

These features favoured and moulded interdisciplinary nuances in the theatrical productions of both Els Joglars or Els Comediants (formed in 1971). However, in considering this interdisciplinary change selected in the introduction of this chapter, an exploration of the formation and methodologies of the groups is crucial. This second shift was equally influential in the creative processes of La Fura and it was also related to the oppression of both Catalan and Spanish freedom.

In a published interview with Erven, Paco Obregón of the Basque group Teatro Geroa recalls that from the early 1960s until Franco's demise,

the theatre was like a gesture of liberty at that moment; like a ceremony of freedom. It was a theatre that gave a wink to its audience. Sometimes, all meaning was contained in a gesture that was not in the text nor in the script, that didn't appear anywhere. It was invented at the last moment, because theatre was alive. That is what gave to the theatre this banner of anti-Franco resistance and celebration of freedom (1988, 147).

Before further detailing the interdisciplinary operations in the Catalan TI, it seems necessary to have a look at the second change taken on board by the TI, which is related to the composition and methods of the groups. Companies such as La Fura were founded during the democratic transition which succeeded the dictator's demise but maintained similar characteristics to the first generation in their compositions and methods or creative processes.

Although differentiating themselves from professional theatre's main emphasis on economic profit, the TI workers who began as amateurs in the early 1960s did not discard professionalism, or economic and administrative independence. This was a vital motivation for the development of the movement. Both Els Joglars and Els Comediants obviously did not have support from the government which they attacked.

The troubled economy of the country and the dictatorship did not allow or stimulate investment. If there were possibilities for private investment in alternative theatre, they were often discarded in both Spain and Catalonia to avoid confrontation with the vengeful regime. Without public or private investment, the TI's groups were formed and transformed in co-operative systems which faced difficult financial circumstances in having to rely on low incomes from ticket sales or hats handed around after street performances, allowed by the regime within the early 1970s. Even moving out from Barcelona and reaching new audiences in the countryside and other big cities, for those who could not count on a familiar stipend, a theatrical career had to leave space for paid jobs in non-artistic areas.

This set of difficulties prevented many of the artists or amateurs from attending paid courses or schools for their training and specialisation. Furthermore, the independent groups might incorporate non-artists, students, musicians, fine artists, dancers or circus artists. Within these multidisciplinary formations, many of these practitioners were self-taught by the experience of working within a *grupo*

independiente. It was the day to day training practice within the amateur groups and the recourse to courses or workshops which provided the training for many of the TI actors, directors, designers or playwrights.

The practitioners who made up the TI groups, however, had different levels of training and/or practice developed both within and outside Spain. Schools such as Ferran Soldevila's Agrupació Dramàtica de Barcelona (ADB, Barcelona Dramatic Group) had provided learning processes for the local artists since 1955. Maria Aurèlia Capmany and Ricard Salvat's Escola d'Art Dramàtica Adrià Gual (EADAG),³⁷ Els Joglars's Estudis Nous (which helped with the company's subsistence) and the Grup d'Estudis Teatral d'Horta's workshops provided training for some of the theatre artists who were to emerge through the TI in the 1960s and 1970s; Lluís Pasqual and many of Els Comediants studied at both Estudis Nous and at the Grup d'Horta. In the early and late 1960s respectively, Boadella and Els Comediants' Joan Font studied at the Ecole Jacques Lecoq in Paris, which fostered an awareness of physicality and visual aesthetics in specific performance sites.³⁸

The co-operative systems of the TI groups collectivised all the work before, during and after the performance. This was similar to other American and European

³⁷ For an introduction on the ADB, the EADAG and the Catalan theatre between 1939-1993 see Gallén (1996).

³⁸ Els Joglars began devising *Mary d'Ous* (*Egg Mary*, 1971) at Ritsaert ten Cate's Micky Theater in Amsterdam. In the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s, festivals such as Nancy, Avignon, Venice Biennale, São Paulo or Caracas meant contact with theatrical tendencies of the Americas and Europe. Groups and artists visiting Barcelona (Italo Riccardi in 1962, the Living Theater since 1967, Enric Buenaventura and Wolf Vostell in 1976, Bread and Puppet and Odin Teatret since 1977) provided other means for the young groups to augment their theatrical knowledge. See Fàbregas (1978) and Saumell (1996, 1998). Some of the fundamental pillars of the distinct phases of the TI and Catalan contemporary theatre went abroad to both train and break away from the xenophobic Francoist regime. Back from Germany in the early 1950s, Ricard Salvat has been associated with the Brechtian epic theatre, 'which became one of the defining features of the [Escola Dramàtica Adrià Gual] School' (Gallén 1996, 25). Fabià Puigserver, who worked with Els Joglars before founding, with Lluís Pasqual, the Teatre Lliure in 1976, had trained in Poland during his family's exile since the early 1950s and had only returned to Barcelona in 1959 (Delgado 1998, 82). This time in Poland proved, as posed by Gallén, a fundamental phase for 'the undisputed teacher and guide of contemporary Catalan stage design' (1996, 32). Pasqual had also trained and worked both in Poland and in Italy during the late 1960s and early 1970s. On Puigserver and Pasqual, see Delgado (1998, 1999).

moves towards collective companies seen in the period following 1968, as exemplified by Bread and Puppet, Oficina, La Comune or Théâtre du Soleil. César Oliva calls attention to the TI actor who 'did everything (acting, pantomime, set the scenery and be manager)' (1989, 374).³⁹ All the work from devising and performing to taking down the indoor and outdoor spectacles had to be shared by all their participants.⁴⁰

This was part of an alteration of temporary functions before and during the performance: directors became musicians, actors were also technicians, and so on and so forth. Both co-operative work and collective creation questioned fixed roles, hierarchies and evaluations related to the administrative, technical and creative aspects of theatre. Boadella or Font, for example, assumed the positions of directors, but always sharing different functions within their ensembles. In a published interview with Moises Pérez Coterillo, Font points out that 'we did not consider ourselves only actors, assistant directors or lightning technicians. We intended to contribute with something else' (1987, 25).⁴¹

This undisciplinarity had in improvisation a main leitmotiv, but not only for the actor. Saumell recalls that for Els Joglars or Els Comediants, and later for La Fura, improvisation became a method for creating the mise-en-scene, instead of an exclusive acting tool (1990, 79). The actors' improvisations were not dissociated from the creation of the visual, sonic and kinetic environment which sought the materialisation of selected ideas during the improvisational process.

Valentina Valentini describes this improvisational methodology in the early 1990s as an already 'classic' working method:

³⁹ 'Hacia de todo (interpretación, hacer pantomimas, montar tablado y ser gestor).'

⁴⁰ For a personal testimony of this exhaustive work, see Ayesa (1978), who worked with Els Joglars during the 1970s.

⁴¹ 'Nosotros no nos considerábamos solamente actores, ayudantes de dirección o de luminotécnica. Pretendíamos aportar algo más.'

in the dramaturgy of spectacle experimented by Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba, Robert Wilson and Pina Bausch: the work with the actors and their improvisations around a skeleton of the spectacle is developed until a phase of selection and montage (put in sequence) all the elements (1991, 41).⁴²

The TI groups sought their own empirical and intuitive methods, laboratories and workshops for enriching techniques, skills and aesthetic options. Particular strategies or techniques differed according to the curiosity and needs of the groups as well as the varied levels of backgrounds and creativity of their members. Although not denying multi-methodological, inclusive or eclectic approaches, a stronger personality or a more skilled artist in the group might orient the learning and creative processes. Glòria Rognoni points out that under Boadella's direction, Els Joglars' collective creations were developed through highlighting the best skills of each actor (1987, 22).⁴³

Each work could demand new approaches incorporating open and eclectic methodologies. The Madrid based company Los Goliardos (founded in 1964) described their work as the search for 'a language for our century. We go further: Stanislavsky-Brecht-Artaud. [...] Accommodating itself within this axis, each group will connect its concrete realities to the aim previously expressed: to be the voice of the people of which it forms part' (in Torres 1987, 84).⁴⁴ This plurality of co-existing methodologies might generate a fragmentation or shifts in the previous methods, theories or schools. Saumell exemplifies it in Catalonia whilst she points out that after 1968, Artaud's theories and the methods of the Living Theater or Odin Teatret co-existed with 'a kind of anti-illusionism, partly derived from Brechtian epic theories, but more playful and

⁴² De la dramaturgia de l'espectacle, és l'experimentat per Jerzy Grotowski i per Eugenio Barba, per Robert Wilson and Pina Bausch: la carcassa de l'espectacle la dona el treball que es fa amb els actors, les seves improvisacions, que es desenvolupen fins a la fase de la selecció i del muntatge (posada en seqüència) de cadascun dels elements.

⁴³ In Rognoni's words, 'nosaltres teníem clar que cadascú havia de fer el màxim de bé el que sabia fer. I això sí que era creació col·lectiva.'

⁴⁴ 'Un lenguaje de nuestro siglo. Adelantaremos: Stanislavsky-Brecht-Artaud. [...] Cada grupo tratará, insertándose en este eje, de acoplar sus necesidades concretas al fin anteriormente expresado: ser la boca del pueblo del que forma parte.'

witty' (1996, 105). Furthermore, in published interviews to Coterillo, Els Joglars stated that 'our method is not to have a method' (1974b, 83), and Els Comediants described that 'our work method is "work"' (1974, 98).⁴⁵ Both groups might acknowledge and welcome known methods such as *Commedia dell'Arte*, Lecoq's or Bread and Puppet's, but they were searching for their own theatricality ideas and methodologies.

This search interacted with the performance spaces used by the companies. It calls attention to the third trait that I introduced earlier in this chapter, which is related to the spatial options of the TI. Every phenomenon evolves in a space, which is also the ground for the unfolding of theatrical language; all the different aspects of this language are conditioned and framed by the space in which they take place. Within the TI, sometimes by choice but frequently by circumstances of the number of venues available or affordable, the theatrical event was performed not in purpose-built theatre buildings but in open or public spaces.

These could be sports grounds, garages, squares or even smaller spaces like the previously mentioned La Cova del Drac. The theatricality developed in these other spaces often made possible (or even unavoidable) the environmental simultaneity of *mise-en-scene*, performers and spectators, questioning the usual spatial and physical separation which frames the theatrical performance. Both an active, direct relationship with the audience and improvisation have been advocated throughout the century by the Futurists, Appia, Meyerhold, Artaud and Brecht. They happened in the TI whenever the presence of censors was not perceived in the performance spaces. Saumell points out that the TI 'actors frequently addressed the audience directly or performed within it' (1996, 105).

⁴⁵ 'Nuestro método es no tener método'. 'El método de trabajo nuestro es "trabajo".'

The multidisciplinary compositions of the TI groups in Catalonia met with a variety of audiences within these non-conventional venues and located spaces within villages and cities which they were to utilise throughout the 1960s.⁴⁶ To establish the desired direct communication with this diversity of spectators (which sometimes had never previously attended any sort of theatre), the groups employed as many disciplines as their heterogeneous and aesthetic aims permitted. In an unpublished interview with Saumell, Els Comediants' Paca Solá defined that there was a desire in the group to use 'all the languages, to work with live music in any space' (1990, 148).⁴⁷ Saumell recalls that, within the TI, 'the important thing was to underline the theatricality of theatre' (1996, 105). Both this critic and this artist call our attention to both a continuation of the historic vanguards' aspirations and its artistically, and even extra-theatrically, cross-disciplinary characteristic.

Different critics have pointed out the extra-theatrical influences which have had a formative impact on much American and European theatre since the mid-1960s (Kostelanetz 1970; Sainer 1975; Marranca 1977; Wiles 1980; Peixoto 1982; Cohen 1989; Saumell 1996; Sánchez 1999). Bonnie Marranca mentions Cagean aesthetics, new dance, popular cultural forms, painting, sculpture, the cinema and television as shapers of this theatre in the United States (1984, 79). In Spain, the TI's creations intermixed dance, music, art, pop culture, circus, cabaret, vaudeville, films, comics, rock concert and television with the gradual appropriation of folklore like *zarzuelas* (popular Spanish operettas), *revista*, flamenco, carnival, popular iconography, ritualistic elements and *fiestas*.

The eclectic companies and the varied audiences within Catalonia and Spain also favoured this artistic cross-disciplinarity to enhance a theatricality which could target

⁴⁶ On the 'off-Barcelona' and theatre in Catalan provinces in the late 1960s, see Fàbregas (1976).

⁴⁷ 'Utilitzar tots les llenguatges, treballar amb música al viu i en qualsevol espai.'

the miscellaneous tastes, backgrounds, skills, limits and objectives of both groups and spectators. Els Joglars and Els Comediants also played with the iconography and aesthetics from Catalan popular culture. Whilst Els Joglars based the narrative of *Alias Serralonga* (1974)⁴⁸ on codes appropriated from Catalan popular traditions and *fiestas* such as Berga's Patum, in Els Comediants' productions these festive elements were and continue to be abundant.⁴⁹

This appropriation of festive features of the popular traditions was occurring simultaneously with the continuous changes in the political and economical landscape of Spain and Catalonia. The drive towards both participation and provocation increased throughout the 1960s in Spain, responding to the political moves within the regime. It reaches a climax in the 1970s when Franco's personal and political health visibly deteriorated. In 1969, Franco had nominated Juan Carlos de Bourbon as his future successor as Head of the State. In a published interview with Marina Amaral and others, Marilena Chauí points out that any dictatorship 'oppresses the working class and the left, and takes out all and any power from the middle class which, notwithstanding, is its sustaining basis. Thence the dictatorship introduces various forms of compensation

⁴⁸ For a descriptive analysis of the production, see Bernal's fifth chapter (1999).

⁴⁹ This iconography included giant figures or the *gegants* and *gegantons*. These are 3 to 5 metre high puppets (usually a man and a woman) which are transported through the streets. They open the popular festivities parading in front of 1 to 1,60 metre large headed and dwarf puppets or *cabezudos* and *nans*, which are also built with *papier-mâché* and animated by performers. Stylised and humanised puppets of the sun and the moon or caricatures of political, sportive or social celebrities may also be seen dancing in the streets. The *diabls* (devils), or Catalan legendary figures such as the *plens*, lead to the fireworks. They perform provocative and dangerous acts to attract and move the audience. The dragon or *drac* is another Mediterranean legend built with *papier-mâché*, which parades, moves the audience and also explodes fireworks. It may be recollected that the presence of the dragon in Catalan popular traditions is due to the fact that Saint George (Sant Jordi) is the national patron saint of Catalonia. The *diabls* comprised the creative leitmotiv for one of the biggest successes of Els Comediants, *Dimonis* (1982). Lecoq expressed his admiration for his ex-student Joan Font's production in the sense of combining outdoor performance, occupation of a space and visual imagery. See Mason (1992). *Dimonis* was the leitmotiv for the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympic Games which Font directed in Albertville in 1992.

for the middle class' (1999, 26).⁵⁰ In the case of Catalonia, the *fiestas* (or *festes*) were one of these compensations.

In Xavier Fàbregas' view, the *fiesta* is 'a phenomenal collective expansion, a type of escape valve in front of the plural repression which the inhabitants of the Catalan Countries suffer' (1976, 111-12).⁵¹ For Jaume Colomer, this idea seems ambiguous, for since Horace's time there has been negative criticism against carnival and *fiestas* as temporary devices of the ruling power 'to avoid people exploding and rebelling, [...] a way of maintaining itself in power during many years' (1979, 67-8).⁵² What is less ambiguous is the fact that kings such as Felipe V or dictators such as Primo de Rivera or Franco diluted or prohibited the Catalan *festes*. Aiming to attack the cohesion of Catalonia's identity and society, Franco was indeed restraining necessary escape valves for repressed societies.⁵³

Under external and internal pressure and the urge towards economic liberalism in the early 1970s, the weakened Franco dictatorship had to permit other escape valves for repressed societies; these included the popular *fiestas* and street performances. Saumell reminds us that within this political change 'popular excitement provoked the appearance of street theatre and the recuperation of traditional festivals banned by Francoism. Catalonia thus rediscovered carnival and the *Festes Majors*' (1996, 113). In the year of Franco's death, continues Saumell, the 'practice of street theatre in all its

⁵⁰ 'A ditadura reprime a classe trabalhadora, reprime a esquerda e tira todo e qualquer poder da classe média, que entretanto é a sua base de sustentação. Então ela introduz várias formas de compensação para a classe média.'

⁵¹ 'Una fenomenal expansió col·lectiva, una mena de vàlvula d'escapament davant les repressions de tota mena que patim els habitants d'aquests Països [Catalanes].' By 'Catalan Countries', Fàbregas is referring to the hypothetical nation formed by those Spanish sites which speak Catalan; Catalonia, the Valencian Country and the Balearic Islands.

⁵² 'Per tal que la gent no exploti i es rebelli, [...] una manera de mantenir-se en el poder durant molt anys.'

⁵³ As early as the eleventh century, the Christian church could not devastate centuries of pagan or popular traditions nor ignore their strength. The option was to invest in a gradual appropriation and transformation of those rites. Liturgical ceremonies devoted to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ started to happen on the same days as spring rituals, institutionalised into public homage by Pope Urban IV in 1264. The 1311 Vienna Council 'universalised' them as Christian festivities, such as *Corpus Christi*. Farràs also supposes that during the following decade many Catalan cities included *Corpus Christi* in their liturgical calendars (1986, 23-6).

various forms (wandering players, parades, processions) was consolidated in Catalonia [...] generating a myriad of groups headed by Comediants' (1998, 16). Before considering the application of elements of *fiesta* in the theatrical practice of Els Comediants, it seems fruitful to outline this concept.

Colomer, Fàbregas, Avellí Artís Gener and Bienve Moya (1980) and Julio Caro Baroja (1979) acknowledge the origins of these phenomena in agrarian or solar rites and pagan ceremonies. These events were organised by people who devised performative and prophylactic attempts at protecting their harvests and themselves against diverse human casualties or natural accidents. Farràs points out that these rites celebrated the renewal of nature that represented the passage from death to resurrection, aiming to stimulate human and natural genesis and compounding 'the ingenuous invention of man, desiring to participate actively in this bio-cosmic regeneration' (1986, 54).⁵⁴ He also calls attention to the *fiestas*' 'original archetype of regeneration, which is primary for this community in feeling identified and integrated into a social and unique body that celebrates its cohesion and identity' (1986, 56).⁵⁵

Patron saints, eucharistic passages, ancestral rites, changes of seasons and harvests may promote festivities in distinct parts of Spain. These include processions, marches, *encierros* (bull running), artistic exhibitions, dances, the staging of old battles, pilgrimages, human castles, balls, self-flagellation, the burning of giant puppets, games, feasts and/or parades. Drinking, bonfires, music, wishes and fireworks are common at these symbolic acts or social ceremonies.

Beyond the economic motivations, these events have a common denominator in breaking from or contrasting with everyday routine. Colomer points out that 'each

⁵⁴ 'La ingènua invenció de l'home, delerós de participar activament en aquesta regeneració biocòsmica.'

⁵⁵ 'Un arquetipus original de regeneració, el qual li és primordial per sentir-se identificada, integrada en un cos social únic, que festeja la seva cohesió, la seva identitat.'

human community has always known to invent their *fiestas*: they may be more amusing in some places and not that much in others, but always suitable to the know-how and manners of that people' (1978, 10).⁵⁶ For Avellí Artís Gener and Bienve Moya, 'the calendar of the *fiestas* of a people is like a radiography of its social organism' (1980, 9).⁵⁷ Jaume Farràs explains that

each society, each people, each individual periodically needs to change the monotony and forget his [sic] social, politic, economic and religious state to dive into one of the religious, politic and mythic orgies, to re-structure, or better said, to renovate the resulting chaos. To live in and from the chaos, to imagine here and there a different history, a distinct connection amongst the men must be a basic need in man himself (1986, 62).⁵⁸

Els Comediants has been assembling Mediterranean symbols, myths, pagan and popular rites or visual, performative and musical elements of carnival and *fiestas* since 1972. The members of the group assume influences from their teachers who form part of Els Joglars and Grup d'Estudis d'Horta, and also from *Commedia dell'Arte*, alternative theatre (Théâtre du Soleil, Bread and Puppet, Teatro Campesino de San Francisco, Odin Teatret), Lecoq, clown and mask works and other elements derived from circus and variety shows.⁵⁹ Formed in 1971, Els Comediants may be considered as a conspicuous example not only of the theatrical employment of festive elements, but also of the changes operating in Spain and their artistically performative exteriorisation within the 1970s.

⁵⁶ 'Des de sempre, cada comunitat humana ha sabut inventar-se les seves festes: a uns llocs més divertides i a uns altres no tant, però sempre adients a la manera de fer d'aquesta gent.'

⁵⁷ 'El calendari de festes d'un poble equival a una radiografia del seu organisme social.'

⁵⁸ 'Cada societat, cada poble, cada individu necessita periòdicament trencar la monotonia, oblidar el seu estat social, polític, econòmic, religiós, i capbussar-se en alguna de les orgies religioses, polítiques i mítiques, per reestructurar, més ben dit, renovar el caos ocasionat. Viure el caos i viure en i del caos, imaginar de tant en tant una història diferent, un lligam distint entre els homes, deu ser una necessitat pregonada en l'home mateix.'

⁵⁹ See Comediants (1999). The group's artistically cross-disciplinary options may be seen from *Non Plus Plus* (1972) and the ceremonies for the Summer and Winter Olympic Games in Barcelona and Albertville, France in 1992, to latter productions such as *T.E.M.P.U.S.* (1997) and the company's incursion into opera with Mozart's *La Flauta Màgica* (*Die Zauberflöte*, 1999-2000).

The group's first production, *Non Plus Plis*, was premiered on 1 June 1972 in Olesa de Montserrat, near Barcelona. The work started with a *cercavila* (or *pasacalle* in Castilian); this festive parade with wind and percussion music, tricks, large puppets animated by performers and dance aims at gathering an audience to the performance area. It derives from church processions, coronations and popular *fiestas*, and it was reworked into a street theatre model initiated by Els Comediants which was later followed by different groups; including La Fura, in its early years.

Non Plus Plis' plot is described on the group's web page:

a peaceful village witnesses the interruption of the village festival on [sic] the arrival of a giant, with a cigar and a top-hat, and his henchmen, a priest and a policeman, who sends them [the villagers] all to gaol so that only the well-off, who are under the giant's protection, can have a good time: a cat, a lion, a frog and a donkey. Both the villagers and the audience decide that either everyone gets to play or the pack must be reshuffled.

As articulated by the group on its web page, its works like *Non Plus Plis* present a 'recuperation of popular elements and their dramatisation, the breaking up of the conventional staged space, [...and] the use of music as a dramatic element'.⁶⁰ If politics and aesthetics can be separated, Els Comediants's transgression was both political and aesthetic. The limits of commercial and conventional theatre, the suppression of personal rights by the repressive regime and also the usual *pogre* (or the orthodox and earnest political-existential code against Franco), were equally infringed by the company's festive theatre. These aesthetic characteristics were entwined to the political resistance which shaped the TI.

'*No More, Please!*' might be a translation of the title of Els Comediants's first street theatre performance. It clarifies a festive and, at the same time oppositional cry,

⁶⁰ See <http://www2.scsinet.es/comediants/especang.htm>. This web page includes summaries of the group's most significant productions. For further reading on the company, see Mason's seventh chapter (1992) or Saumell (1996, 1998). *El Público*, 27, (1987) is a valuable source. Berenguer (1983) and Cabal and Santos (1985) present interviews with Font and other Comediants.

against the Francoist regime. Behind the innocent, pop and festive façade of the show, there was in the view of Joan Anton Benach, both a 'grotesque incarnation of Francoism and the powerful demands of cultural expression which had been submitted to a long process of domestication' (1987, 7).⁶¹ Saumell states that Els Comediants's 'recuperation of the *fiesta* – understood as a pagan ritual – signified an act of national self-assertion' in Catalonia (1996, 113). This may explain why at the day after the performance of *Non Plus Plis*, Barcelona policemen searched the actors, describing them as criminal swindlers or '*estafadores*', as documented by Pérez Coterillo (1987b, 58).

In *Non Plus Plis* Els Comediants began to work out another main feature in their imitated model which was to be influential in the productions created by the second generation of TI practitioners. This feature is the participatory and provocative relationship with the audience. This pervasive characteristic of outdoor performances was attempted through artistically cross-disciplinary performances within which Els Comediants emphasised the non-naturalistic body work of the performers, improvisation and the dramatisation of Catalan legends, popular songs or dances founding the group's *fiesta*-based theatre.

Óscar Cornago Bernal sees Els Comediants and Ca Barret or Madrid's Tábano as Spanish exponents of a ludicrous-festive theatre which overlapped with the trend of ritualistic theatre represented by Grup d'Estudis Teatral d'Horta and Cataros or Seville's La Cuadra (1999, 26).⁶² Bernal states that ritual constituted one of the most efficient models towards the renewal of theatrical languages across the twentieth

⁶¹ 'Encarnaciones grotescas del franquismo y la reivindicación poderosa de unas expresiones culturales sometidas a un largo proceso de domesticación, en el mejor de los casos, situadas en los ámbitos de la etnografía y el folklore.'

⁶² Bernal also points to the Théâtre du Soleil, Grand Magic Circus and Bread and Puppet as international exponents of the festive tendency, and the Living Theater and creators such as Jerzy Grotowski, Eugenio Barba and Peter Brook exemplifying the use of ritualised and almost religious features and forms in their theatre works. See Bernal's first chapter (1999).

century (1999, 35). He points out that the theatrical vanguards of the 1960s and 1970s and their paradigmatic models of ritual and *fiestas* or game (play) opened an infinite number of creative possibilities for the following decade (1999, 269). Concomitantly to the postmodern distrust of the great narratives, continues Bernal, other scenic alternatives reacted against the strict order and the mystical, transcendental and even religious tones which were characterising the ritual tendency in theatrical vanguards (1999, 29-30).

Both ritual and *fiestas*, therefore, not only concern the TI first generation. Both forms impregnated the *lenguaje furero's* relational feature or the relationship with the spectators in a common performance area. This feature aided the artistic interdisciplinarity that this thesis proposes as achieved by La Fura. *Suz/o/Suz* (1985) saw a conspicuous employment of ritual in both the production's form and content. Thus, ritual connects the historical vanguards, the TI and La Fura, and as such it demands some further examination before concluding this section.⁶³

Any overview of ritual visibly presents conceptual intersections with *fiestas*. 'Drawing on the definitions of several anthropologists,' Bruce McConachie states that 'ritual may be seen as the repetitious, formalized, and dramatically-structured communication of significant cultural meanings, effected through the involvement and catharsis of its participants, which functions to legitimate an image of a social order' (1985, 474-5). This definition of McConachie seems to indicate reasons for both the study and practice of entwined anthropological and aesthetic bases via ritual in contemporary theatre, social sciences, media and performance studies (Schechner 1973; Turner 1980; Hughes-Freeland 1998).

⁶³ Whilst Innes (1993) is a valuable overview of ritual and primitivism in the historical vanguards, alternative and contemporaneous theatre, Bernal is a valuable research on both *fiesta*- and ritual-based theatre in Spain within the period 1965-75. Korver (1991) is a study on the ritualistic and mythic presence in La Fura's works.

Felicia Hughes-Freeland replicates the crossed borders and intersections between ritual and theatre, when she points out that 'ritual generally refers to human experience and perception in forms which are complicated by imagination, making reality more complex and unnatural than more mundane instrumental spheres of human experience assume' (1998, 2). Although avoiding definitional strategies, Freeland considers the commonalities between performance, ritual and media because 'all raise questions about the framing of reality, the forms of participation within an event or experience, the limits of representation, and questions of scale' (1998, 10). Ritual, *fiestas* and some areas of contemporary theatre are prominent sites of these features indicated by Freeland and McConachie.

Freeland states that 'Bell's definition of ritualization as "a way of acting that is designed and orchestrated to distinguish and privilege what is being done in comparison to other, usually more quotidian activities" (1992:74), applies equally well to performance if it is not understood as the replication of a given script or text' (1998, 3). It is certain that the employment of ritualistic features in theatre aimed at providing a distance from the exclusive understanding of theatrical performance as a literary, logocentric and verbal domain.

Desired by Artaud, epitomised by Grotowsky, practised within 1970s theatre and continued by Barba, ritualistic performances in theatre privileged archetypal images and a cathartic sensuality in a staged ceremony which sought to be performed by actors and spectators. Bernal points out different features which nurtured and characterised the ritualised theatre: the performative formalisation or precise stylisation; the primal scream; the image of the martyred individual in Western civilisation, and the naked body of the 'expressive man' centring and organising the event (1999, 36-49). This ritual-based theatre assaulted hierarchies and conventional principles established by the legitimating forces of both a reality and theatrical practice which should be modified.

This favoured the creation of a new 'reality' beyond referential imitation and within a structured, closed and autonomous time/space axis.

The dissolution of borders between life and art were promoted within a coded but direct communication with the audience based on other semiotic systems like gesture, movement, image and sound; improvisation and collective creations; the enactment of human obsessions; provocation, and primitivism (Bernal 1999, 49-55). For Saumell, 'a simultaneity between action and perception, between relation and exchange, between associative, immediate logic and rational-aesthetic [and] cognitive apprehension' displays the strength of ritual as a structure or form which permeates and inspires contemporary theatre in several ways (1990b, 6).⁶⁴

Some of these ways and the dialogue between ritual and *fiestas* were pioneered in Catalonia by Els Joglars and Els Comediants. Nevertheless, Joan Brossa (1919-1999) preceded both groups' appropriation of festive elements and the political infringement it represented in Francoist Catalonia. For Saumell (1998), Brossa's *Accions* (1962) as well as the inception of Els Joglars in the same year are foundational moments for the TI. Brossa has been a special reference and presence in the visual arts, performance art and theatre in Catalonia, and by extension, Spain (Fàbregas 1978; Camps 1988; Picazo 1988; George 1995; George and London 1996; Bernal 1999).

David George and John London consider him to be 'the most prolific of contemporary Catalan dramatists' (1996, 73). Having written his first play in 1942, Brossa departed from the Catalan surrealism of the 1930s to a diverse conjunct of works in different artistic languages which he called 'Object Poems' and 'Scenic or Theatrical Poetry' (1996, 74). His cross-disciplinary productions were present in

⁶⁴ 'La simultaneïtat entre acció i percepció, entre relació i intercanvi, entre lògica associativa, immediata, i aprehensió estètico-racional, de tipus cognoscitiu [...] són mostra d'una vigència de la forma-ritual en el nostre teatre contemporani.'

different collaborations with artists such as Joan Mirò and Antoni Tàpies, musicians Carles Santos and Josep M. Mestres Quadreny, and as a founder member of the art and literary group *Dau al Set*.⁶⁵

Attempting a systematic division of Brossa's work, Fàbregas as well as George and London divide it into five groups. *Accions Espectacle* or *Postteatre* (*Spectacle Actions* or *Posttheatre*) consists of 68 short plays without dialogues written between 1947-62.⁶⁶ *Normes de mascarada* (*Rules of the Masquerade*) were 49 ballet scripts written between 1948-54. The other groups were *Fregolismes* or *Monòlegs de Transformació* (*Fregolisms* and *Transformation Monologues*; 30 monologues written between 1965-66)⁶⁷, *Strip-tease i Teatre Irregular* (*Striptease* and *Irregular Theatre*; 72 pieces written between 1966-67) and *Accions Musicals* (*Musical Actions* with Quadreny, Santos and singer Anna Ricci during 1968) (Fàbregas 1978, 3145; George and London 1996, 81-82).

Earlier in this chapter, I cited Sirera's view regarding the lack of innovation in playwriting in Catalonia between 1946 and 1966, but Brossa offered conspicuous, interdisciplinary evidence of innovation in theatre writing. It is worth noting, however, that for Brossa, the basic ingredient of theatre is not literature, but carnival (George 1995, 332). It is remarkable that Brossa devised theatrical events which went beyond written plays or conventional disciplinary limits of this art form and also of the fine arts. His visual and dramatic creations eluded existent labels or categorisations. Brossa's work could be described as original Happenings and pre-Cagean experiments with music-hall, movement, transformism, *sainets*,⁶⁸ autobiographic elements, magic,

⁶⁵ For an overview on Brossa's work see Fàbregas' chapter XIV(1978), George (1995) and chapter 3 in George and London (1996, 71-90). On *Dau al Set*, see Cirlot (1986).

⁶⁶ For George and London, these *Spectacle Actions* began in 1948 (1996, 81).

⁶⁷ George and London explain that these were named after the Italian transformist Leopoldo Fregoli which Brossa admired for his carnivalesque theatre and his skills in changing characters (1996, 74-75; 98).

⁶⁸ 'The *sainet* is a one-act, humorous and often satirical play, the tradition for which dates from the seventeenth century' (Saumell 1996, 126).

everyday life, cinema, *Commedia dell'Arte*, carnival and performance art. Brossa's trajectory is intermedia, marking an early artistically interdisciplinary instance in Catalan arts. He illustrates a local tradition of experimentalism and cross-disciplinarity that encompassed the *fiestas* and popular traditions which is also present in the first and second generation of TI's groups. Brossa's importance in pioneering alternative theatrical models within Catalonia's cultural landscape should not be underestimated.

Brossa, Els Joglars and Els Comediants acknowledged the theatrical strength inherent in either/both the *fiestas* or/and the ritual form. They rescued these forms and challenged, satyrised and infringed the Francoist values which prohibited their free manifestation: the ritualistic and the festive tendencies within the TI and/or Brossa's work resembled each other in attacking the regime, artistically performing a Catalan reaction against it and raising questions of national and artistic identity/ies. These artists also assaulted fixed taxonomies related to theatre.

Els Joglars, Els Comediants and Brossa were some of those who promoted the renewal of live arts or performance languages in the period leading up to the death of the dictator in November 1975.⁶⁹ Admiral Carrero Blanco had been designated as President by Franco for five years on 4 June 1973. Some months after that, the murder of Carreri Blanco by ETA in Madrid avoided that succession. In 1974, Franco was hospitalised and Prince Juan Carlos de Bourbon assumed the position of Head of the State, followed by Arias Navarro as the Head of the Government. Arias Navarro announced the demise of Franco on 20 November 1975. Franco's death was openly or intimately celebrated in Spain and abroad, indicating a general desire for social, political and cultural changes. Franco's demise was a definitive rupture which triggered a phenomenon which was to change both the country and the TI. On 22 November

⁶⁹ For an introduction to Franco's dictatorship, see Tamames (1990).

1975, the King Juan Carlos I conducted delicate negotiations with Francoists and the opposition which initiated the transition towards democracy. The following section displays that these political events were paralleled by cultural and artistic changes which were crucial to La Fura's beginnings.

3.3. Afterwords: Post-Francoism and the Democratic Transition

Montserrat Guibernau points out that in 1975,

both Catalans and Basques felt that they had not only the right but also the power to press for a political solution to their claims for self-determination. However, what some saw as a solution was seen by others as a threat to the integrity of the 'Spanish nation' (1997, 137).

Guibernau explains that the delicate Spanish social climate after almost forty years of dictatorship and the extremely weak condition of the devastated Catalan language, identity and culture, led Jordi Pujol to recognise that 'there was no space for speculation or gambling. Spain had a powerful state that would not allow Catalonia, its richest part together with the Basque Country, to secede' (1997, 151). The political strategy of Catalan nationalism within the transition had its main reference in Pujol: he has been elected six consecutive times since 1980, with a current mandate as president of the Catalan government that lasts until 2004.

In 1976, Pujol and *Congrés de Cultura Catalana* (Catalan Culture Congress) acknowledged that 'at the time of the transition, some 40 per cent of the population was born outside Catalonia' (Keating 1996, 120). Josep-Anton Fernández argues that at that time 'almost half of the population could not speak Catalan, [...] the dictatorship had made most of the Catalan-speaking population illiterate in its own language' (1995, 343). He also recalls that the number of books published in Catalan in 1976 was around the same number of 800 titles, as in 1936 (1995, 343). In spite of the TI or Nova

Cançó's resistance, Franco's regime had dismantled the Catalan infrastructure created during the nineteenth century.

Fernández points out that these facts and figures were acknowledged by the Congress and Pujol's political discourse as 'abnormal' (1995, 342). This abnormality was gradually substituted by a linguistic and cultural normalisation (*normalització*),

essential to the full recovery of Catalonia's national identity, [... aiming at] a society in which Catalonia's own language would be hegemonic, in which citizens would share a common sense of (Catalan) national identity based on their cultural traditions, and which would be comparable to any other modern European society in terms of cultural infrastructure, habits of cultural consumption, and the balance between high and mass culture. [...] The final goal of this process is to reach a situation of *de facto* cultural independence, the old aspiration of nationalism (Fernández 1995, 343).

The claims of the *normalització* have been entwined with the achievements of more autonomy in the political game played with Madrid.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the central government had/has its own radically different idea of which normalisation was/is needed. Guibernau points out that the *normalització* avoided 'the accusation of separatism, something that would immediately disqualify it and ignite the old flames of Francoism in the hearts of those still envisaging a unified, free and great Spain ("*España: Una, Grande y Libre*")' (1997, 151). Direct confrontation with the Spanish state was not part of the official discourse of Pujol, who condemned a 'lack of trust, knowledge and understanding between Catalonia and the rest of Spain' (in Guibernau 1997, 147).

Adolfo Suárez, from the Unión de Centro Democrático (UCD, Democratic Centre Union) was elected Prime Minister in 1977, the first democratic election since 1936. The Spanish Ministry of Culture was created in 1977. Its task was to promote 'the arts both through state support and by encouraging private sponsorship for art-related areas',

⁷⁰ On Catalan *normalització* see Fernández (1995) and his claims to a reassessment on the same process (1997).

as documented by Emma Dent Coad (1995, 373). Theatre artists began having their works subsidised by the Ministry: Spain was beginning a process that in France, for instance, had begun after World War II.⁷¹

The Spanish arts were also enjoying the obvious benefits of an apparent end to the censorship, which had seemed to be 'officially' over in 1976. It is interesting to notice that running parallel to the softening of the regime in the 1970s, Els Joglars gradually negotiated the passage from their mime shows towards the balance between the company's visual and kinetic-based features and a written or verbal theatre. While works such as *El Joc* (*The Game*, 1970) or *Mary d'Ous* (*Egg Mary*, 1972) in the early 1960s and 1970s represent the non-verbal works, *Àlias Serralonga* (1974) or *La Torna* (*Left Overs*, 1977) exemplify the second moment of the group. Also worth noting here is the fact that censorship displayed its surviving tentacles against the latter production.⁷² Although this event contrasted with the general euphoria which followed Franco's death, censorship was replaced in 1977 by a free and frantic expression of artistic and social segments, matching political and economical traits.⁷³

Antonio Elorza claims that

the economic development of the 1960s had finally laid the foundations for a Madrid-based Spanish state nationalism which fused political authority and economic power. But even though the economic pre-conditions for the peripheral nationalisms no longer existed, the cultural/historical fact of nationalist consolidation in the regions and especially in Catalonia and Euskadi [the Basque Country], meant that no simple centralizing solution was feasible, fostering the means for diverse cultural traditions to affirm themselves and develop (1995, 333).

⁷¹ In a published interview in 2000, Jean-Pierre Miquel, the Comédie Française's general administrator indicated that this initial funding was responsible for the good health of French theatre in the late 1990s. He attributes this to both the decentralisation of the French government's cultural politics and the participation of city halls, provinces and regional and national administrations in funding theatre: France has 5 national theatres financed by the State, 40 national dramatic centres subsidised by distinct administrations and 500 companies supported by regional and municipal funds. He recalls that Marseille had only one theatre twenty years ago and nowadays the city has 21, whilst Paris has 140 theatre venues. See Juan J. Gómez, 'La enviable salud del teatro francés', *El País*, 30 August 2000, p. 35.

⁷² For an overview of this act of censorship which arrested and exiled members of Els Joglars, see chapter 9 in Erven (1988).

⁷³ For another description of the Catalan context after Franco, see Bath's introduction (1987).

The 1977 Generalitat returned autonomic rights to Catalonia. The popular will was clear in the 1977 manifestation of more than a million Catalans on the streets of Barcelona on their national day 11 September, demonstrating for the return of autonomy. This provisional autonomy for Catalonia was agreed between Suárez and Josep Tarradellas, a Catalan leader who had been in exile since 1954. The agreement was also a reward from Suárez for the support of Pujol's party, *Convergència i Unió* (CiU, Convergence and Union), which had been necessary for Suárez's majority in the Spanish parliament. John Hooper acknowledges the quick re-establishment of the Generalitat as a *coupe de main* of Suárez against the demands and possible agitation of younger nationalists' which could disturb the initiation of the democratic transition (1995, 45).⁷⁴

The degree of autonomy agreed to Catalonia by Suárez at this stage did not represent much power but it anticipated what the 1978 Constitution was going to implement. In 1978, the new Constitution came into effect and the new Catalan assembly was opened. The Constitution was a product of

the consensus achieved between the main political parties that emerged from the first democratic election. The need to obtain the support of both Francoist reformists and anti-Francoists generated endless discussions in the writing of the Constitution and even contributed to a lack of precision and coherence in some parts of the text (Guibernau 1997, 136).

Elorza cites Article 2 of the 1978 Constitution, which affirms 'the indissoluble unity of the Spanish Nation', as the premise for then recognising 'the right to autonomy of the nationalities and regions of which it is composed' (1995, 333). This ambivalent article of the Constitution has been used by the Spanish State as a constitutional weapon against movements towards independence since 1978.

⁷⁴ On the democratic and economic transition, see Arango (1985).

The parliament and popular referendum approved the new Constitution in 1978. For Hooper, 'the outstanding innovation of the 1978 Constitution was the sharing of power with its regions, which occupied almost a tenth of its length' (1995, 43). After dissolving the constituent parliament, Suárez called another general election in 1979. The Spanish parliament granted home rule to Catalonia and the Basque Country 'with speed and generosity. Both communities gained control of education and won the right to set up their own police forces and radio and television stations' (Hooper 1995, 45).

Spain began negotiating its entrance into the European Community in 1979. The country's historic autonomies believed in a 'Europe of the Regions' which might respect and motivate the autonomies and rights of the continent's nations without state. A new European identity joined the antagonistic political perspectives through the possible maintenance of a wealthy and peaceful progress. Helen Graham and Antonio Sánchez point out that 'Spaniards' eager acceptance of their new "European" identity is entirely comprehensible given their past sense of isolation and long-frustrated need to modernize social and economic structures' (1995, 417). Manuel Castells argues that in the case of Catalonia, the move was 'not simply clever tactics [...but] it comes from the centuries old, pro-European standing of Catalan elites, in contrast with the splendid cultural isolationism practiced by most Castilian elites in most historical periods' (1997, 50).

The new socio-political situation in Spain and Catalonia after the changes catapulted by Franco's death and the democratic transition made the term 'independent' a little anachronistic for TI artists. The new context of freedom of expression, the establishment of commercial circuits, and the relations and positions within an institutionalisation of culture promoted mainly by state subsidies disclosed a new reality for theatre artists in Spain. The Assembly of Professional Actors and Directors of Catalonia, the Association of Professional Independent Theatre (ATIP), the Teatre

Lliure and the Grec Festival had already been created in 1976. Mercè Saumell points out that by the late 1970s, Els Joglars and Els Comediants were subsidised by the State and both groups 'had become big businesses involving many people. Without financial aid, they could not exist. (Nothing could be further from the original ethos of the Independent Theatre)' (1996, 106).

Saumell also lists the demise of different groups such as Cataros, La Claca (Barcelona), Los Goliardos and Tábano (Madrid) or Akelarre (Bilbao) for not responding to the demands of the new era (1998, 11). Els Comediants and Els Joglars survived because they were able to keep developing their professional structures and markets within and outside Spain. Both companies' interdisciplinary operations and interests made them able to work in different media, especially TV, and the organisation of public events and commodities such as books, films and LPs.⁷⁵

The end of the movement was announced during the conclusion of the El Escorial talks in 1980, which acknowledged the anachronism of the TI. However, the movement continued to manifest an influence through the legacy of its companies, some still in operation. Saumell calls attention to the idea that this inheritance is still seen in theatrical - and cross-disciplinary - variations like 'Dance Theatre, Circus Theatre, Image Theatre, Space, Industrial Theatre and Catastrophic Theatre (whose formal innovations had already been taken on board, in an intuitive way, by the TI)' (1998, 11).

This chapter does not assume that either the tensions between nationalists of Spain and Catalonia or the desire for retheatricalising theatre have somehow been placated. The unattended demands of Catalonia persisted in the 1980s and 1990s. The

⁷⁵ Els Joglars devised TV programmes and series such as *Som una meravella (We Are Simply Wonderful)* for Catalan TV 3 in 1989 or *Ya semos europeos [sic] (Now, Let's Be European)* for Spanish TV in 1991. Els Comediants had a first television show in 1976, *Terra d'escudella (Land of Stew)* for TV 3. They released the LP *Sol, solet (Sun, Little Sun)* in 1983, the film *Karnaval* in 1985 and have been organising events such as the 1992 Winter and Summer Olympic Games' ceremonies. See Saumell (1996).

second generation of the TI privileged aesthetic cogitation instead of the political performativity against Franco. Nevertheless, those years of 1978 and 1979 cannot be denied as decisive years which conspicuously indicate a changing social and political context in both Catalonia and Spain. It was into this changing panorama that Marcel·lí Antúnez, Carles Padrís and Pere Tàrrades arrived in Barcelona and founded La Fura dels Baus.

CHAPTER 4

LA FURA'S PRE-HISTORY

Introduction

Chapter 4 investigates the inception and the early productions of the group from 1979 to 1983. In their interviews with the author, La Fura summarised this first period of the group as its 'pre-history'. The company has rejected this phase as irrelevant: in a published interview in 1984, Àlex Ollé already announced that La Fura renounced their previous productions as an anachronistic moment in the ensemble's history.¹ Nevertheless, the description of the pre-history is the crucial objective of this chapter for the most important reason that this period has not been considered to a systematised or productive extent.

The group's rejection of this early phase seems to have been accepted and repeated by scholars documenting and commenting on the company's work (Saumell and Ferrer 1988; Saumell 1996, 1998; Feldman 1998). Francesc Cerezzo (1986) and Albert de la Torre (1992) provide brief exceptions in approaching the first period. However, the first and equally brief inclusion of the pre-history in a language other than Catalan appeared only recently in parts of a published interview with Marcel·lí Antúnez published in Castilian and English by Claudia Giannetti (1998). In fact, the documentation of this whole phase is almost non-existent, even in the complete press files of La Fura in the group's office and rehearsal space in Gavà, Barcelona. Therefore,

¹ 'Renunciamos al pasado. Artísticamente en este momento no respondemos para nada a esto'. Jose J. Murugarren, 'Doce "zombis" industriales', *Nafarroa*, 3 August 1984, p. 3. It may be noticed that La Fura did not celebrate a twentieth birthday in 1999 as El Tricicle (also formed in 1979) did, with its production *Tricicle 20* at the Teatre Victoria in Barcelona.

nobody has written at length in any language about the group's pre-history. Thus, this chapter's first objective is to document a history which is only ever referred to in an introductory or dismissive manner.

This chapter distances itself from the aesthetic anachronism which is alleged by the group and echoed by the critics. This disagreement acknowledges the rupture between the periods (1979-83 and 1983-89) but questions the alleged non-relation between them. Instead, this chapter examines the pre-history to outline both the first steps of the group and a possible basis of the artistically interdisciplinary performances developed by the ensemble from 1983 onwards, which should not be considered as a sudden apparition from a void. Finally, this chapter anticipates that the investigation of the pre-history may comment further on the relationship of La Fura to its wider geographical and cultural contexts.

The first section investigates the inception and early productions of the company. The second section focuses on the 1982 line up of the ensemble which was to be maintained throughout the 1980s. Both sections also comment on the changes occurring within Spain and Catalonia in the late 1970s and the early 1980s. These changes encompass the democratic transition, *el desencanto* and *la movida*, the alterations in the *Teatro Independiente*, and the internal transition within La Fura from the street theatre work towards an artistically interdisciplinary theatre. This chapter's afterwords may then weave some considerations on the relations between both periods of La Fura. The descriptive analysis previously used in chapter 3 is also utilised in this chapter as a means of narrating an untold part of La Fura's trajectory.

4.1. Inception, Early Productions and *el Desencanto*

Aiming to approach the beginnings of La Fura, it seems productive to commence with a description of the origins of the company. The group's initial founders in Barcelona in 1979 were Marcel·lí Antúnez, Carles Padrisa, Pere Tantinyà, Quico Palomar, and Teresa Puig. The former three men met at the primary school in Moià, a small city of 3.000 inhabitants, 60 km from Barcelona.

Concluding their courses in 1978, Padrisa and Tantinyà started working respectively as a bricklayer and a carpenter. Neither of them had the financial security needed to undertake their desired studies of music and architecture in Barcelona, unlike Antúnez who went to the city to study fine arts. Nevertheless, they moved to Barcelona some months later in early 1979.

In an interview with La Fura conducted by Francesc Burguet i Ardiaca, Antúnez recalls this move resulting from an intuitive force which united the three young men who were all willing to leave the small *pueblo* to experience urban life and 'to do something together' (1990, 208).² In an interview with Claudia Giannetti, he recollects that

a lot of things changed in the two last decades, but when I was seventeen years old, when I came to live in Barcelona, I wanted to run away from my family [and a] tough rural life.[...] I was the youngest but one, of six brothers and sisters, the older brothers and sisters served as models at the time, so you could see what was going to happen to you in the next few years. So I decided to study and do a graduate degree. Although I wasn't a very good student, my family was economically capable of letting me be one. That was my way of escaping.

After a year in the Catalan capital, I told my friends in the village that it was a fantastic place: meeting other people, the bars, the girls... So they came to Barcelona as well, and we rented a flat close to the Rambla. A few months later, Pere Tantinyà, Carles Padrisa and myself founded La Fura.

The years 1978 and 1979 were very special in Barcelona. There was a lot of energy there – Nazario, Ocaña, Mariscal in his early days, magazines like *Star*, *Ajoblanco*, alternative comics – and even though this situation didn't last very long (as the 'scene' [*la movida*] moved to Madrid in the Eighties), it was a very lively moment, culturally speaking. We lived in a house on Arc del Teatre Street through which a whole load of people came and went, so that a very special, intense set up was created. This was the context in which – on the 13th of May, 1979, to be precise –

² '[Veníamos] con el ánimo de hacer vida urbana, de cambiar de aires, de hacer algo juntos, porque, en un pueblo como Moià, llega un momento que no tienes otra salida.'

La Fura dels Baus was born. It was our way of channelling this energy. So it wasn't a thought-out process, but rather formed part of an existential moment (1998, 28-9).

Amongst the 'load of people' who came and went to their flat, the trio from Moià met the amateur actress Puig and the singer, composer and artist, also from Moià, Palomar. The quintet created and baptised the group.³

Palomar seems to be an early mentor for the trio from Moià. Describing the special reverence with which these first *fureros* still hold the artist,⁴ Albert de la Torre seems to echo their admiration when he describes Palomar as

one of those characters which maybe history will not remember, like many others which were important in turning the streets into a *fiesta* and avoiding that the traditions of activities in public spaces that democracy had recuperated turned into folklorism. Palomar was one of those who ensured that these activities acquired a personality and created a new culture of spectacle which has had an enormous vigour throughout the 1980s (1992, 41).⁵

Besides the trio's personal experiences with the *fiestas* in Moià, Palomar was another early link of La Fura with popular traditions. He was also an early connection with interdisciplinary nuances. In a published interview in 1994, Tantinyà affirms that Palomar 'perverted us in the forms of playing': the interviewer paraphrases Tantinyà saying that Palomar 'taught them that in the Middle Ages the actors enchanted the

³ Some of the group members wanted the name 'La Fura' while the others, 'Els Baus'. 'La Fura dels Baus' was the solution that privileged the sonority and the Surrealist tone of the combined names.

⁴ Unpublished interviews conducted by the author with Antúnez, Tantinyà and Padrisa confirm this reverence for Palomar. The performer has provided the author with the video 'Cantautot' (Columpio Pictures Video, 2000); it presents an interview with the artist and the current music show that Palomar and Enric D'Armengal (an ex Els Comediants collaborator) perform in bars and *fiestas* mainly in Barcelona. At the time of finishing this chapter (September 2000), Palomar can be heard on the city's Radio RAC-U programme, 'No son hores', Fridays, 12:30 p.m. Jaume Vidal presents a profile of Palomar in 'Una ànima errant', *Barcelona Metròpolis Mediterrània*, (May-June 1997), 35, pp.74-5. Palomar also performs with the music group Els Bourbons. Taking its title from the name of the dynasty that still reigns in Spain with King Juan Carlos I, the band merges irony, sarcasm, and traditional rock with props and costumes from Catalan popular traditions, as well as a Romantic maintenance of countercultural values. Els Bourbons has recorded CDs such as 'Ous de Reig' (Els Bourbons, 1999) or participated in collective CDs such as 'Directe al...ZEL' (La Rulot and Radio 106 Flash Back, 1997).

⁵ 'Un d'aquells personatges que la història potser no recordarà, com tants d'altres que en algun moment van fer que els carrers fossin una festa i que les tradicions d'activitats en espais públics que la democràcia havia recuperat, no es convertissin en folklorisme sinó que adquirissin una personalitat pròpia i creessin una nova cultura de l'espectacle, que ha tingut, durant tot els anys vuitanta, una vigorositat enorme a Catalunya.' Torre's (1992) mention of Palomar is exceptional in that it is the only one, amongst the few studies to deal with the first period of La Fura's work.

crowd with a type of multidisciplinary art which did not dispense with any skill or artifice'.⁶

The initial and artistically multidisciplinary idea of the group was to be both a musical band accompanying Palomar and a new street theatre or *animació* group.⁷ It seemed a way of both financing the group and pushing their few artistic experiences in Moià further under the more artistically experienced guidance of Palomar. Guided by this pluridisciplinary pursuit, Padrís added the study of the tenor saxophone to his piano experience. Parallel to his Fine Arts course, Antúnez started learning the trumpet, whilst Puig learned the clarinet and Tantinyà the trombone, preparing themselves for the first performance of *La Fura*.

It took place on 13 May 1979, at the Fira de Sant Ponç (Saint Ponç Fair) on the Carrer del Hospital (Hospital Street). It was one of many short music shows within the Fira, mixing theatrical actions and music. In an unpublished interview with the author, Palomar suggests that this mix helped to disguise the group's elementary skills in both theatre and music.⁸ Nevertheless, the first performance motivated the group to attempt a first collective creation within which they could experiment with music while privileging theatre.

They returned to the countryside in the early Summer of 1979 to devise *Vida i Miracles del Pagès Tarino i la seva Dona Teresina* (*Life and Miracles of the Peasant Tarino and his Wife Teresina*). They rehearsed *Vida* in an old house in Pasarell, outside Moià, belonging to Antúnez's family. The piece was to be toured through the Catalan *fiestas* during the Summer. The first performance took place on 15 August 1979 at

⁶ 'Palomar nos pervirtió en las formas de jugar.' 'Palomar les enseñó que en la Edad Media los actores encantaban a la plebe con una suerte de arte multidisciplinar que no despreciaba habilidad ni artificio alguno.' See Elena Pitta, 'La Fura dels Baus, una década escarbando en el caos', *El Mundo*, 29 May 1994, p. 40.

⁷ Street animation might be the closest for *animació* work. As it is a clumsy translation, however, I am keeping the word in Catalan.

⁸ Barcelona, 10 May 2000.

Moià's *fiesta*. The majority of *Vida*'s performances happened within programmes of the *fiestas* which include many diverse events, like music shows, games, exhibitions, theatre performances and gastronomic indulgence.

Vida began with the initial *cercavila* or the festive parade to attract spectators to the play area, a two square metre stage in a cart. This first and circumstantially unconventional venue was built by Tantinyà after receiving 100.000 pesetas from an inheritance on the death of his father and a redundancy payment when he left his carpenter's job.⁹ He then bought a mule to carry the cart. The cart minimised the strategic problems which the group faced in touring, like transport, housing and venue hunting. These were to prove costly to other beginner groups seeking to tour. The cart carried the props, costumes and sets; it could also be converted into accommodation for the night.

The plot of *Vida* was contained within four small acts. Given the increasing urban speculation occurring in the Balearic Islands and along Catalonia's coast, *Vida* appears topical in discussing the dilemma around selling the land. The production ended with the return of young men to the land which their parents had lived in but sold to try life in the big city. Naive paintings on curtains hanging on rustic appliances attached to the cart's structure could be changed to frame the different scenarios of the acts.

The performers alternated characters using different voices, body gestures and changes of masks and costumes. Popular catchy music, folk songs or Catalan traditional music (*sardana*) and improvisation permeated the production. The participation of the audience was triggered by the actors, who could ask for solutions or share the insights and problems of the characters; improvisation was demanded throughout.

⁹ Around 400 pounds in December 1999.

One or two performances happened during daylight. The next morning or sometimes on the same day there was a new journey to another city, usually around 15 km from the last one. During 68 days in the summer of 1979, according to Cerezzo, the play was performed in 35 small cities of Catalonia (1986, 54).¹⁰ One of the last performances of *Vida* was supposed to happen in Moià in November 1979 but it was forbidden by the local mayor. According to Torre, a Moià native informed the mayor that one *furero* had been seen urinating in the street of another *pueblo*. The cart's number plate denounced the group. Moià's mayor invited them to leave the city (1992, 34-41). The incident is recalled here because it attracted the first mention of the group in Barcelona's public media.¹¹ It also gives an idea of the conservative Catalan countryside the trio sought to leave behind. Furthermore, the incident was an initial catalyst in gaining the company a notoriety which the media and the ensemble were to develop in the mid-1980s. The following chapters will deal with this notoriety.

The money for the subsistence of the group was collected in a hat after each performance. More rarely it was received by one of the *fureros* from the temporary employer. The group also promoted the fake lotteries of a rabbit or a leg of ham to increase its income. Without taking into account the ethical discussion that such a lie might represent, it also attests to low profits needing complementary support: this economic discrepancy troubled the group for years, mainly in its first period.

The intensity of living and working together on tour may result in problems – and here I am not just referring to economic difficulties – for artistic collectives,

¹⁰ In unpublished interviews with the author, Antúnez mentioned 30 cities and Tantinyà 79 days. When questioned about Cerezzo's different numbers, both interviewees opted to accept the critic's figures. The interviews were held in Barcelona, respectively, on 30 April 1998 and 04 April 1998.

¹¹ See unsigned, 'El alcalde de Moià prohibe "La Fura dels Baus"', *El Periodico*, Barcelona, 15 November 1979, p. 12. Although Torre (1992, 45) points to Cerezzo's article in the magazine *Serra D'Or* on 22 October 1983 as the first mention of La Fura in the press, the 1979 reference in *El Periodico* as well as the publications mentioned in endnotes 15, 17, 19, 21, 29 and 34 of this chapter indicates that La Fura received press coverage earlier than previously documented.

professional or otherwise. There are no published reviews of *Vida*, but in interviews with the author, the trio from Moià describe a positive public reception to the production. Referring to this first tour in an unpublished interview with the author, Antúnez mentions a 'collective charisma' achieved after the intensive learning process he experienced with Padrisa and Tantinyà.¹² The reality of the first tour of an amateur or semi-professional street theatre group seems to be a clear test for the appearance or not of the fruitful amalgam cited by Antúnez. The first tour of La Fura was an experience far from the international structure that the ensemble maintains today. In that sense and under conditions far from appropriate, La Fura remaining together after the difficult conditions of its first tour might be considered a victory.

The school of street theatre may indeed be a sharp and merciless test. Street theatre practice demands an internal and peripheral concentration balanced by improvisation. The performances in open spaces, exposed to both weather afflictions and momentarily disturbing circumstances, require physical and vocal fitness. During the interaction with the surrounding audience, the performers' methods, tricks and techniques are continuously tested.

The stillness, focus and concentration of the audience can easily turn into movement, refusal and escape, when faced with the immediate presence of the performer. The performer needs to deal with this and looks for his/her reserves of extra energy, another gag, the right gesture or sound to win back the spectator's attention, competing with the living environment around the performance.

The public may indeed interfere. It is constantly invited to do so. Sometimes this participation punctuates the performance: it can play a decisive role. When there is no interaction it may be a negative index. Excessive interference may also disturb or abort

¹² Barcelona, 30 April 1998.

a street performance. The performances within *fiesta* programmes meant a competition where the spectators simultaneously enjoyed many options. It increased both the facility of spectator dispersion and the need for imaginative wit on the part of the performers.

Throughout the pre-history and even in 1984, the group improved its manageability of these street conditions. This learning process during the earlier part of the first period involved a street training with crowds or spatial and relational proposals that would be fundamental for the group's next period or its articulation of a *lenguaje furero*. That first tour in 1979 involved a series of practical classes for La Fura within an exchange of empirical learning processes that continued for the next three years. Attending other public performances in the *fiestas* and streets, the artists experienced different traditions of Catalan culture and expanded their sense of scenic potential. They were also witnessing the skills and insights of other artists or 'competitors' and evaluating their own needs in terms of technical and creative improvement.

Antúnez also recalls, in his unpublished interview with the author, that the tour was to be definitive in maintaining the trio together throughout the 'entropy' which the group was to face until 1982. Antúnez uses 'entropy' in the sense of an increasing disorder. The remainder of this section examines part of the period of disorder he mentions.

Back in Barcelona, the group opened a new show, *Sercata* (the slang for *cercavila* or *Parade*), in March 1980. During the first half of the year they also presented one-day shows such as *El Diluvi* (*The Deluge*), *Sant Jordi S. A.* and *El Viatge al País Furabaus* (*The Journey to the Furabaus Country*). *Sant Jordi*, was presented on Catalonia's patron saint day, 23 April and *Viatge* was presented at the *Tamborinadas*, a May event for children at the Parc Güell, within which Els Comediants were the main attraction.

All these works were variations of the *animació* work involving children and adults. La Fura joined the improvisations, games, dances and make-up sessions which

were other components of the *animació* work. In an unpublished interview with the author, Pep Gatell recalls the active and sometimes anarchic participation of the children as a fundamental part of the self-teaching process of La Fura.¹³ Working with the group, the children built big puppets with recycled litter, cardboard and papier-mâché. These as well as the small scenes were reworked to be re-used in the next show, *Patatús (Shock)*.

Patatús was rehearsed again in Pasarell during the early Summer of 1980. After being performed in three or four Catalan cities, *Patatús* was presented in Barcelona in August 1980. The new work attempted to re-work the previous shows, balancing the traditional elements of Catalan *fiestas* with more contemporary issues. The plot satirised life minutes before a nuclear catastrophe, and was rendered in the language of comics with music underscoring the whole production. Guitar and drums were added to the show as well as props, masks and costumes made with organic and inorganic materials such as bones, pans, horns and scrap metal. There were two screens on opposite sides of a central marionette stage. The yellow screens had an irregular pattern printed on by chickens who had walked over it with paint on their feet. Although on a timid level in comparison to the work later developed in the first trilogy, this was La Fura's first experiment with art, organic materials and live bodies.

In that same year of 1980, Jordi Pujol was elected President of the Generalitat, for his first term of office. His government created a Department of Culture in the same year, as a primary element in the implementation of the linguistic and cultural normalisation programme. This has been 'central to the dramatic growth of the Catalan culture market since then' (Fernández 1995, 343). As Joan Guitart, the Culture Minister

¹³ Barcelona, 29 April 1998.

of the Generalitat would later claim in 1990, 'in cultural matters Catalonia should be equivalent to a state' (in Fernández 1995, 343).

This general decentralisation provided an addition to the subsidies handed out by the Spanish Ministry of Culture. The members of the TI began assuming posts in the autonomous administrations. The banning of censorship as well as Els Joglars, Els Comediants and Dagoll Dagom turning professional configured a new situation for the alternative theatre in Spain and Catalonia. It is also known that studying this different reality, the TI meeting at El Escorial near Madrid in 1980 argued for the dissolution of the movement. Nevertheless, the artistic parameters set by the movement were prevalent within theatre practices in Spain after that date. The short trajectory of La Fura may serve to illustrate this.

All La Fura's shows provided evidence of the company's alignment with Els Comediants' street theatre and *animació* patterns, beginning with the traditional *cercavila* before the performance of small scenes and sketches. These sketch-structured works in different public spaces of the city were, in turn, evocative of the narrative forms which Els Joglars pioneered in Catalonia. The use of music and circus techniques which were being studied and gradually incorporated into the group's performances as well as the use of the Catalan popular iconography also resembled both Els Joglars and Els Comediants. Torre recalls La Fura's meetings during its 1979 tour with both Els Joglars and Els Comediants, stressing the latter as 'a measure for all street theatre and *animació* groups' (1992, 34);¹⁴ this measure was also evident in *Patatús*.

Patatús was performed throughout the nation until 1981. The Catalan Department created the Centre Dramàtic de la Generalitat (CDG) in this same year. For Enric Gallén, the CDG was part of 'the start of a new political era [which] meant the steady

¹⁴ 'Els Joglars que els havien de rebre prou calorosament, i amb Comediants, el grup que servia de mesura de totes les coses pel que fa al teatre de carrer i d'animació.'

growth of an institutionalized theatre, subsidized by the new democratic political institutions at various levels: state, autonomous community (i.e. Catalonia), province (the Diputacions) and town council' (1996, 30). Within the cultural policy of the Generalitat and the emphasis on the staging of Catalan playwrights, La Fura was not a potential investment in that it lacked cultural visibility. This visibility was not augmented with the second citation of La Fura in Spanish newspapers on 21 August 1981 when an unsigned article about the *fiestas* described the 'Moianese group La Fura, which also did some circus imitation numbers.'¹⁵ The short item refers to *Forat Furero* (*Furero* - or *Ferret's* - *Hole*).

Rehearsed in the early Summer of 1981, *Forat* was, like *Patatús*, another collage of scenes. *Forat*, however, changed *Patatús*' leitmotiv of comics for the circus. During the performance of sketches in an imaginary arena in public outdoor spaces, after the usual *cercavila*, circus characters interacted with the audience in the imitation of a circus show. The company dealt in a comic, relaxed and even self-ridiculing manner with their lack of technical expertise in professional circus skills. Stilt-walking, juggling, fire eating and tight rope skills, however, were improved.

The different skills of the various performers who joined (and left) La Fura orientated this employment of other theatrical forms in their collective creations. During 1980 and 1981, La Fura performed *Sercata*, *Patatús* and *Forat* more than one hundred times. Sebastian Antúnez, Marcel·li's brother, assumed the management of the company and also performed in its shows during 1981. He was responsible for more constant contacts with Anexa: this company in charge of casting animation groups for the *fiestas* across Catalonia began hiring the ensemble on a more regular basis. Nevertheless, the increasing demand for the *fureros* did not match with the

¹⁵ 'El grup moianès La Fura dels Baus, els quals també van fer algun número d'imitació de circ'. Unsigned, 'Festes Majors: plat fort de l'agost', *El Nou*, Barcelona, 21 August 1981, p. 28.

discontinuous and inconstant composition of the ensemble. Between *Patatús* and *Forat*, a decision to turn professional and create a stable group reduced the ensemble to four members, the trio from *Moià* plus Mireia Tejero, a sax player and performer. As part of the rejection of the pre-history, *Noun* (1990-92) has been described as the first *furero* work to have women in the cast. Tejero, however, and Puig before her, contradict this description.

Drawing on Cerezzo's documentation and unpublished interviews conducted with the *fureros*, it may be acknowledged that the trio from *Moià* kept together but the ensemble might vary from four to fifteen members. Taking into account friends or acquaintances who might take part in the musical accompaniment or participate in one or more performances, the number might be elevated to thirty. It also allowed for contacts and exchanges with different individuals from distinct artistic disciplines, enhancing the pluridisciplinary motivation of combining music and theatre. This flexibility, however, also had its negative facets: suddenly the group could need the fourteen players of the last production but have only five available, with two newcomers needing to be rehearsed.

Maintaining a fixed group was an impossibility at this time. The performers had to accept freelance jobs or work with different groups to pay their bills, abandoning or interrupting rehearsals for financial reasons. It meant a constantly changing ensemble and consequently involved recasting and reworking shows. The constant changes in the group's line-up did not attract the higher degree of achievement that a continuous process of work amongst steadier partners may produce: it is obvious that this intense mobility involved a Sisifian effort. This accelerated and tiring mobility of the group was a prominent reason for the 1979-82 entropy mentioned previously by Antúnez. It may be noticed that the disordered instability of the group's composition and the consequent disenchantment cited by him is chronologically linked with the *desencanto* period in

Spain: the *furero* 'entropy' might be seen as a micro-version of the disappointment which was questioning Spain's democratic transition. Antúnez does not link these two 'entropies' but the following section attempts to elaborate this hypothesis further.

The sexual and political euphoria that followed the death of Franco began to be darkened by the lack or delay of conspicuous transformation in Spain. The censorship and legal process against Els Joglars and their production *La Torna* in 1977-78 had already shown the frailty of the delicate democratic transition. The Constitution, elaborated within a permanent tension between Francoists and anti-Francoists, did not satisfy the calls for more autonomy by Basques, Catalans and Galicians. The increasing unemployment, corruption and debt accentuated a questioning of the accomplishments of Adolfo Suárez and the UCD. Both this uncertainty and the consequently disappointed *pasotismo* (dropping out) were reinforced with the failed military coup on 23 February 1981, which haunted the democratic transition with the possible return of dictatorship.

Both Spain's and La Fura's *desencanto* reinforced doubts about the future of the country and the company. Within La Fura, the mood of disenchantment was gradually lifted by six new members who joined the group. During 1980 and 1981, Jordi Arús, Miki Espuma and Pep Gatell took part in the trio's works. During 1982, Àlex Ollé, Jürgen Müller and Hansel Cereza also joined the company. All of them gradually committed themselves to La Fura as the main *modus vivendi* and the central focus for their artistic cogitation. They also compounded the line up of the ensemble which was to be maintained throughout the 1980s. Within Spain, the decade was to witness further changes which were artistically encompassed by *la movida*. The following section cross-examines La Fura's transitions within the larger changes occurring in Spain.

4.2. The 1980s Expansion, *Reanimació* and *la Movidà*

Jordi Arús was a shepherd in Sabadell, near Barcelona. He played in amateur theatre groups and attended short courses in mime, pantomime, improvisation and corporeal expression with teachers from Barcelona's Institut del Teatre. At circus workshops he began developing his tight-rope skills. He had also a strong interest in machinery that connected him to Antúnez and Tantinyà.

Miki Espuma shared the group's interest in merging music and street theatre. Espuma played piano, synthesisers, guitars, electric bass, mandolin, accordion and percussion. He was also a rock singer in different bands like *Truita Perfecta*. At the age of 16, he had already performed at concerts like the 1976 Canet Rock Festival, within which *Els Comediants* were also performing an *animació* piece. He had also carried out some cross-disciplinary experiments such as the devising of sound tracking to the silent films of Man Ray. Espuma ensured a more skilled partnership for *Padrissa*. Antúnez's, Tantinyà's and, a little time later, Pep Gatell's musical knowledge and ideas equally matched the creative experiments of Espuma.

Gatell represented a more developed theatrical experience for the group. As with the others, Gatell had an interest and practice in different artistic disciplines. Gatell's formation included short courses on Stanislavsky's method and voice at the Institut del Teatre, an acrobatics workshop with Rogelio Rival, and soprano saxophone studies at the Real Conservatori del Liceu and Taller de Música de Barcelona. He had performed in different street groups such as *Petita Companya de Teatre Amantis*, *Raval*, *La Bambalina*, *Farsans*, *Col·lectiu d'Animació de Barcelona* and *Trup-Q-Trip*. He had also experience of TV comedy acting and puppetry for the RTVE programme *Quitxalla* in 1981.

In 1982, the group established the nine man formation that was to be maintained throughout the decade. Àlex Ollé reinforced the theatrical knowledge of the group,

being the only one who had finished a longer or more systematised training in performance. From 1979 to 1981 he undertook the Institut del Teatre course on puppet and object manipulation. During this period, he also enrolled on voice courses. Besides joining in the Institut's Companyia de Titelles (Puppetry Company), Ollé did workshops with Odin Teatret and Carlos Bosso and also performed in cabaret and puppet groups such as Xiulet and Trup-Q-Trip, the latter with Gatell. Like Gatell, Ollé also had comic acting experience on *Cucafera* (RTVE, 1981).

Jürgen Müller and Hansel Cereza were the last performers to join the ensemble. Müller was a baker in Weiterdinger, Germany. Like the trio from Moià, he also left the countryside searching for urban life and his artistic training. In his native country, at the Dimitri School in Switzerland and in Paris during 1977 and 1978, he attended short courses on improvisation, circus, mime and clown work but maintained a firm interest in dance, with jazz, improvisation and classical dance courses. Moving to Barcelona in 1979, he joined the dance course at the Institut del Teatre, undertaking additional courses in circus and puppetry. Cereza was a nurse before performing with La Fura. He was invited to join the company by Gatell; they had met at Rogelio Rival's acrobatics course in 1982. Cereza had climbing skills and was also enrolled in contemporary dance courses. He was the final addition to a cross-disciplinary profile which began guiding the group's next steps. The nine men together composed a gathering of interests, training and practice in different branches of the performing and plastic arts.

Sebastian Antúnez left the management of the group in the Summer of 1982. His place was taken over by his younger brother and Arús. The whole group aided the pair's tasks in a co-operative system which initiated the ensemble's custom of dividing all their productions' creative and technical roles. In 1982, Arús left the group temporarily because of health problems, joining it again in 1983. During his absence, he

was replaced by Roger Blavà (b. 1960). Although Blavà's firm interest was in music, especially percussion, he joined the group as another street theatre-music performer.¹⁶

Correfocs was the first collective creation of these nine performers, opening in August 1982. The *correfocs* are part of the Catalan popular traditions which were rescued during the political and social opening of the Francoist regime in the early 1970s. Sharon Feldman sums up the *correfoc* as 'a ceremonial rite of purification often performed around the time of the summer solstice, in which fire-breathing, dragons and devils are paraded through village streets, their final destination being a large bonfire in the town square' (1998, 459). This parade is thrillingly animated by the devils which manipulate and explode different pyrotechnic devices dangerously close to the spectators, relying on the bravura and skills of both spectators and performers.

La Fura's *Correfocs* was another re-transformation of *Sercata*. Similarly to Els Comediants' previous work, *Dimonis (Demons, 1982)*, La Fura was employing characteristics from popular traditions. These included the devil-animators, fire, hand rockets, fireworks and other pyrotechnics. These were used by both groups to move the audience alongside their performances. However, *Correfocs* was a humble production if compared to the sophisticated and expensive *Dimonis*.

Electrofocs (Electricfires), a night version of *Correfocs* was performed for the first time on 17 August 1982. The evening setting allowed for more experiments with pyrotechnics and visual spectacle. The *fureros* were costumed as angels, three of them on stilts: both aspects were part of *fiesta* events such as the *Cavalgadas* (Christmas parades). In that year, Ollé and Antúnez also participated in Jerome Savary's Grand Magic Circus's *Història d'un Soldat (A Soldier's Story)*, enjoying an opportunity to see and study the spectacular use of pyrotechnic devices and the physical and visual

¹⁶ Blavà plays in the CD *Ombra* released by La Fura in 1999.

sophistication of the production.¹⁷ The lessons learned by them were soon employed in both *Correfocs* and *Electrofocs*.

Both productions were embedded in a desire to move away from Els Comediants' style which characterised street theatre practice in Barcelona. La Fura began to discuss a necessary reinvigoration of their own practice, naming this possible renewal of their work as *reanimació*. It was represented, for instance, by the live music which formed the backdrop of each performance: it was altered with effects on synthesisers and scrap metal percussion as elements close to post-industrial music and noise music. The Italian Futurists Russolo and Balilla Pratella had proposed this art of noise in the first decades of the last century as a means of composing with sounds from instruments and objects. Within the late 1970s and 1980s, post-industrial music may be seen as an enlarging of the Futurists' proposal allowed by developments in technology and through the creativity of groups like the SPK (England) and Einstürzende Neubaten (Germany).

The musical expertise of Espuma, Padrisa and Blavà was complemented by the musical spontaneity and eagerness of the other *fureros*. Instead of the *sardanas*, the usual sound accompaniment of Catalan street theatre, La Fura might merge charlestons with rock, samplers or live noise music as well as accelerate the folk music. Fireworks were used as a powerful visual framing, offering dramatic and sonic punctuation for the succession of scenes.

Both the score for the show and the increasing risk taken by the company were fundamental in differentiating the group's *reanimació* and grounding the future *lenguaje furero*. Cereza's climbing scenes and Arús' tight rope scenes saw the company work more assuredly in vertical spaces. Suspended flights were visually emphasised by lit firework and smoke machines.

¹⁷ Unsigned, '9 actores catalanes con el Gran Magic Circus', *El Correo Catalán*, Barcelona, 29 September 1982, p. 3.

In addition to these dangerous scenes for the performers, the element of risk also included the audience which had to run from the firecrackers thrown by the group. The *correfocs* strategy cleared spaces for the scenic actions and raised the adrenaline levels of both performers and spectators. A supermarket trolley full of exploding fireworks was another trick in *Electrofocs*, in which, according to Cerezzo, 'the pyrotechnic, the electric fire, the petrol flames and the mechanic-electrical rhythm of the percussion instruments became the protagonists' (1986, 55).¹⁸ *Electrofocs* was the group's first performance at the 1982 Tàrrrega II Fira de Teatre del Carrer (Street Theatre Festival). It was performed continually until the end of that year and during part of 1983.

In a published interview with a magazine in Moià in October 1982, the group mentions more than one hundred performances of *Correfocs* and *Electrofocs* in Barcelona's public places and in Catalonia's carnivals and *fiestas*.¹⁹ The large number of performances attested to an increasing acceptance of La Fura by both the public and hiring agencies. Nevertheless, the ensemble's *reanimació* was questioning the aesthetics, performativity and discourse of the *animació* work in relation to both the group's and the country's *desencanto*: the *fureros* were not pleased with the work they were doing. In an unpublished interview with the author, Gatell stresses the medical meaning of the word *reanimació*, or to bring back to life, when applied to the *fureros*' use of it within the dark time of the *desencanto*.²⁰

This *reanimació*'s aesthetic cogitation was interrupted by a contract to perform a supporting theatrical role in Oriol Tramvia's show at the Teatre Poliorama from 18 to 26 January 1983. The singer and composer wanted the group's festive *animació* work, including the *cercavila*, angels on stilts, comic gags and band music. Two reviews for

¹⁸ 'La pirotècnia, el foc elèctric, les flames de petroli i els ritmes maquinals-electrizants dels instruments de percussió es converteixen en protagonistes.'

¹⁹ Anna Piella and Joan Soler, 'Artistes i artesans del moianès', *Truc Revista del Moianès*, 1982, 47, pp. 16-17.

²⁰ Barcelona, 29 April 1998.

the show were written by Albert Mallofre and published in *Avui* and *La Vanguardia* on 20 January 1983. These articles may be considered the first published critical readings of La Fura's work.

Although praising the group's collaborative work for Tramvia's show, which 'crowned the spectacle with authentic, flowing and participating animation, and a healthy and contaminating, general rejoicing', Mallofre suggests that

the successive apparitions of La Fura dels Baus (¿or 'la fira dels bous'?) are acceptably bright within the context in which they are produced, but they reveal their origins in street *animació*, because in fact, in either conventional theatre or circus, many artists have been doing it much better, for many years.²¹

Mallofre's review seems to belittle La Fura's artistic skills in street *animació*, associating them with a type of amateur theatre and circus. It is not unlikely that the *fureros* at this point also associated professional theatre with either 'bad circus' or conventional theatre. While Müller appreciated conventional or literary theatre as a spectator and Ollé sought to work in mainstream theatre, the other *fureros* were repelled by conventional theatre. For them, it was embodied in the proscenium arch's cold distance, bourgeois passiveness, naturalist acting in imitative performances, the verbal predominance of outdated texts and a lack of artistic ambition. In their interviews with the author, La Fura generalised this type of theatre as dead theatre. This idea is similar in a certain sense to Artaud's protests and search for another theatrical language or Peter Brook's ideas named as such in *The Empty Space* (1968).²² It may also be connected to what Susan Sontag had named in 1966 as a Surrealist tradition,

²¹ 'Coronando el espectáculo con autentica animación desembarazada y participativa, con sano y contagioso regocijo general' and 'las sucesivas apariciones de La Fura dels Baus (¿o "la fira dels bous"?) resultan aceptablemente vistosas en el contexto en que se producen, pero acusan su procedencia de animación callejera porque, realmente, en un teatro convencional o en un circo, muchos artistas han hecho todo aquello mucho mejor, durante muchos años.' See respectively Albert Mallofre, 'Diversión "Tramviana"', *Avui*, 20 January 1983, p. 32; and 'Arrancó la "Vía 00" a cargo del peculiar Oriol Tramvia', *La Vanguardia*, 20 January 1983, p. 43.

²² 'Deadly Theatre' is the first chapter of Brook (1968).

represented by 'aggression on the presumed conventionality of its audience and, above all, aggression toward the medium itself' (1966, 269).

It is interesting to note that La Fura's incursion into either the Surrealist tradition which Sontag describes or the *reanimació*'s theatricalised aggressiveness was still lessened by humour and comic interludes which avoided the emphasis on violence that was to be associated with the group's first trilogy. However, both La Fura's participatory drive and the audience's willingness to keep on the move lend the company a more frantic character. These characteristics supported the *fureros*' desired differentiation from Barcelona's street theatre style, including their own productions: in interviews conducted with the author, the *fureros* recalled that they had these critical reservations for their contrast within the introspective period of the *desencanto*. For those reasons the group was attempting the *reanimació*.

Within its search for an artistic identity, La Fura opened *Festival Fura Rècord's* on 14 May 1983. *Festival* was another sketch-structured recompilation of cabaret, comic scenes and circus skills. For the first time however, the group included an outside supervisor, Victor Oller, in the hope of weaving a production which cohesively organised their techniques, insights and scenes. *Festival* included more urban and contemporary themes with characters such as a sex maniac, a pyromaniac *torero*, a 'Yankee' *Wes-kin-kaos* (See-what-a-chaos) and a terrorist with a bomb.

Festival was organised as a satirised dramatisation of a circus show, but it was greatly improved by the more experienced and committed composition of La Fura. The direct relationship with the spectators was enhanced. During the show, the actors invited the spectators to touch 'the usually untouchable actor'; it was announced ironically as a blessing only possible in their shows. This ironic gag is recalled here for the importance and mutation that it would assume later in the *lenguaje furero*'s relational and spatial aspects.

This is another example of the negotiations between the first and second periods, and also links the company's work to the relational features that guided some of the historical vanguards or Els Joglars and Els Comediants and other alternative theatre groups such as The Performance Group or Oficina which worked the suppression of the fourth wall and/or environmental techniques.²³ Turning our attention from the trajectory of La Fura to the wider social context or the political panorama in Spain and Catalonia, it is possible to indicate that the changes in the group's playing style chronologically matched the changing modes of being in Spain and Catalonia. The *desencanto* period was being superseded by what achieved visibility as *la movida*.²⁴

Graham and Labanyi apply the term *la movida* to 'the explosion of creative activity, centred around youth culture, which dominated the Madrid cultural scene in the late 1970s through till the mid-1980s' (1995, 423). Moncho Alpuente indicates a complete strip-tease done by a couple of teenagers on the statues of Daoiz and Velarde at the Plaza 2 de Mayo in Madrid on 2 May 1976 as a possible foundational date of *la movida* (1999, 637). He warns that this mobile, disperse phenomenon refused the categorising label which was rapidly adopted and divulged by the media in 'a key moment of the transition which claimed new faces, new voices and new tendencies and behaviours as a testimony that finally things were changing' (1999, 637).²⁵ Gerard Imbert (1986) dates *la movida* as beginning in the period 1982-83, matching with the internal *movida* of La Fura establishing its line-up and *reanimació*.²⁶

This impossibility of a definitive or foundational date for *la movida* is part of the acknowledgement of the evasiveness which characterise both postmodernism and its

²³ For an introduction on environmental theatre, see Schechner (1973b).

²⁴ The term '*la movida*' is attributed to foreign journalists by Emma Dent Coad, who stresses its slang meaning; drug dealing (1995, 377). The slang also means going out to party and going through hectic or stressful times.

²⁵ 'En un momento clave de la transición que reclamaba nuevos rostros, nuevas voces, tendencias y comportamientos para testimoniar que por fin las cosas estaban cambiando.'

²⁶ Gerard Imbert, 'El Madrid de la "movida"', *El País*, 25 January 1986, 10-11.

particular Spanish features which seem to be related to this phenomenon. Imbert (1986), Graham and Labanyi (1995), Graham and Antonio Sánchez (1995) and Alpuente (1999) acknowledge the other relational and societal forms occurring in the period which evaded both social-professional categorisation and immutable identities. Alpuente uses the term *la innombrable* (the unnamable) coined by the movement's Joaquín Leguina, to approach the social and cultural phenomenon that both the democratic transition and the changing rhysomatic contingencies of global contemporaneity were underlying in Spain (1999, 638). *La movida* had its epicentre in Madrid but echoed throughout the country. Imbert affirms that the phenomenon also aimed at a territorial and cultural affirmation of Madrid over Barcelona, 'capital histórica de todas *las movidas*' (the historical capital of all *las movidas*) (1986, 10). Different critics recall the historical convergence of the phenomenon and the socialist mandates in both cities, without denying either the apolitical connotation or the mutation of aesthetic and ethical codes and values (Graham and Labanyi 1995; Graham and Sánchez 1995; Alpuente 1999).

The period 1982-83 was another intersection of transitional changes within both La Fura and the Spanish State. Felipe González from the PSOE, *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) won the 28 October 1982 election with 10 million votes. It was the first time since 1932 that a left wing government had been elected and these votes concretised claims for clear changes. The PSOE's victory pointed to national discontent at the apparently slow processes of the democratic transition, and indicated a mandate for change.

Spain was witnessing a social transformation unimaginable ten years earlier. This rapid modernisation had also resulted since 1980 in high levels of unemployment. However, the process of joining the European union initiated in 1979 was a common economic and social interest for Madrid and the autonomies which supported González.

La movida was also made up by sentiments of cultural affirmation after what Imbert describes as a 'complex of exclusion' (from Europe) which triggered a 'xenophobic discourse by inversion: "they exclude us because they envy us"' (1986, 10),²⁷ Spaniards and Catalans, nevertheless, played the European Community card as a fundamental move towards modernisation. Spain was negotiating a transition from dictatorship to democracy within a country fastening international links. Throughout and after this process, the new enterprise culture was stimulated to export the idea and reality of a 'new' country. Coad argues that the arts, fashion and design 'blossomed overnight and were quickly hailed as the new hope of a new Spain' (1995, 377).

Both *la movida* and the 1980s articulated a defamiliarisation of known or accepted codes and presented other values in Spain. The *progre* code employed in the anti-Francoist fight, which had already been questioned within the *desencanto*, left space for the modern or *guay* code.²⁸ This counter code of *la movida* may also be compared to the post-punk or 'new wave' in other parts of the Western world with their youth cultures that reprocessed punk values and merged them with pop aesthetics. Punk's aggressive tones were thus diminished and the movement was displaced further from exclusive class borders. As such, its consumerism was facilitated. These mutations of punk maintained, in many cases, a degree of rebelliousness as well as a disenchanting distrust of authority and order, challenging hegemonic values. Although the skinheads were around in England already in the 1960s, skinheads are considered one of these mutations of punk, brought dangerously close to nazism. The *guay*, urban, post-punk code was present in some of the young characters of Pedro Almodóvar's early films like *Pepi, Luci, Bom y otras chicas del montón* (*Pepi, Luci, Bom and other girls of the heap*,

²⁷ 'Es el discurso xenófobo por inversión ("nos excluyen porque nos tienen envidia", se ha podido leer en alguna parte).'

²⁸ This *progre* code may be described as a more orthodox or an earnest behaviour in attracting allies for the political battles against Franco. See also pages 38 and 39 of this thesis.

1980), *Laberinto de Pasiones* (*Labyrinth of Passions*, 1983) or *Qué he hecho yo para merecer esto?* (*What have I done to deserve this?*, 1984). Imbert, Graham and Sánchez, Alpuente, Coad and Graham and Labanyi point to Almodóvar as the most notorious product of *la movida*. They indicate that he seems to have captured the co-existence of the old Spanish world, its traditions, the old fashioned and the kitsch with the irony, pastiche, foreign influences, punk, technology, and the new hopes and fashions of a country in transition. Both Imbert and Coad include Almodóvar within a rebuttal of the past by the generation born in the 1950s or 1960s.

The appropriation of punk references succeeded hippie motifs. Besides that, immediate pleasure, drugs, urbanism, the transformation of the old functions of public or private spaces, subsidised productions, and performance were embraced. 'Performance' may be comprehended within its almost ubiquitous reach, involving a visibility of plural and marginal performativities, emphasis on action, public spectacle, public exhibition, the punk catch-phrase 'do-it-yourself', the '*look moderno*', theatricality and voyeurism.

Imbert concludes his article on *la movida* listing the production of artistic and cultural objects, characters (*personajes*) and the calendar of events which also characterised *la movida*. *Fiestas*, *Els Comediants* and *La Fura* converge in Imbert's mention of the theatrical production of the two groups as well as the *San Isidro fiestas*, carnival and Autumn festivals as part of the cultural production and calendar of *la movida* (1986, 11). *Accions* (1983) and *Suz/o/Suz* (1985) were the productions cited by Imbert but the 1982 *reanimació* was drafting the impact theatre which was to justify the group as an index of *la movida*.

Within the *reanimació* phase, *Festival Fura Rècords* toured Catalonia and gained increased public recognition. In an article published on 1 September 1983, Josep Vilar Grébola states that the '*Felliniesque* performers had been definitively consecrated this

Summer as a great animation group after having gone through a thousand and one *fiestas mayores* across the Catalan landscape. Uncommon originality [...] although they continue, as ever, penniless.²⁹ In response to the persistent economic problems and by channelling the creative energy of the *reanimació*, a new work was devised.

Mòbil Xoc (Mobile Shock) was a new production for the 1983 Tàrraga III Street Theatre Festival. According to the *fureros* in conversations with the author, the participation of La Fura at the previous year's street theatre festival in 1982 with *Electrofocs* neither pleased nor motivated the organisers Els Comediants and Xavier Fàbregas to invite more work. It was the insistence of the *fureros* which gained them an unpaid festival slot, scheduled for 12 September 1983.

Mòbil Xoc began with the arrival of the actors in a van with a strident police siren. The ensemble travelled through the public imitating a classical police offensive. Police authoritarianism was ridiculed by fast-moving comic gags, accompanied by a score of New Orleans swing music. One player used a canon shooting firecrackers and confetti, and another actor had a suitcase full of firecrackers, opening passage ways amongst the spectators and moving them along from place to place.

It is known that firecrackers and rockets exploding amongst an audience have been a common and thrilling part of Catalan *fiestas* such as the Berga's Patum. Less powerful rockets are used in *cercaviles*, performed by *diables'* associations and independent participants in different Spanish *fiestas*. Confetti is another catalyst instrument used in carnivals and *fiestas* in Brazil or Italy. In Spain, there is a tradition of *fiestas* with public battles; thousands of tomatoes or wine, flour, eggs, flowers,

²⁹ 'Los *fellinianos* fureros se han consagrado definitivamente este verano como un gran grupo de animación tras recorrer mil y una fiestas mayores por toda la geografía catalana. Originalidad poco común [...] aunque continúan como siempre, sin un duro.' Josep Vilar Grébola, 'La marcha de La Fura dels Baus recorre toda Catalunya', *El Periódico*, 1 September 1983, p. 11.

merengue, water or even live ants are thrown by/on the participants.³⁰ These are collective performances where risk, adrenaline and play form a cathartic element. This tradition or device of battles has been employed by the company in distinct ways from *Electrofocs* to *ØBS* (2000) and recently forbidden by the Liceu in *D. Q.* or *Don Quijote en Barcelona* (2000).³¹ It is simultaneously a visual act and a tool to assist in moving the audience; it touches, taints, includes, marks, menaces, stimulates, irritates, excites or expels spectators.

Being simultaneously exposed to and part of the multiple *fiestas*, La Fura was also reprocessing this popular genre as Joan Brossa, Els Joglars or Els Comediants had done before them. The *fureros'* festive street theatre could still be considered within the earlier pattern established by Els Comediants but *Mòbil Xoc* took La Fura's distinct features further. The musical score, the electronic support, the costumes in yellow (a taboo colour to Catalan designers such as Fabià Puigserver)³² and black which mixed Constructivist, Futurist and new wave references, the use of the fireworks and the urban themes and actions of La Fura were marking the company's presence in and beyond Barcelona.

Having gathered the public at a *plaza*, the abrupt *cercavila* of *Mòbil Xoc* used other gags and pyrotechnic effects, even performers on burning stilts. Another

³⁰ *La Tomatina* is an internationally known *fiesta* in Buñol, Valencia. Participants at the *Peliquetros festa* in Laza, Galicia throw live ants, water and flour on each other on the second day of the event. The flower battles happen in Laredo, Cantabria, after a parade with allegorical cars decorated with flowers. The wine battles are in Haro, La Rioja, among participants who wear white clothes and bring wine in *botas* (leather recipients). *Merengue*, eggs and flour are the ingredients of more recent events in Andalusia's *fiestas*, involving supporters of the Sevilla and Betis football teams.

³¹ Padrisa and Ollé wanted to sprinkle the audience with water in the last act when a deluge destroys Barcelona, but the artistic directorate of the opera house disallowed this because of the velvet seats and the clothes of the spectators. See Lourdes Morgades, 'La Fura dels Baus se retracta de haber acusado al Liceo de censurar una escena de "Don Quijote"', *El País*, 29 September 2000, p. 52.

³² This superstition of Puigserver was pointed out by ex-Joglars and Teatre Lliure actress Carlota Soldevila in an interview published in *Un Toc de Festa*, August 1999, special edition, 32-34. The magazine is a special publication for the Barcelona neighbourhood Gràcia's *Festa Major*. This theatrical superstition of theatre artists in different parts of the world has been related to the death of Molière on the stage, wearing a yellow costume.

performer with a smoke machine attached to his back joined the scene descending through a rope from the church's bell tower. Fireworks marked the beginning of sketches. In one of them, 'Furol' was advertised as a product that could clean and fix anything. Another performer went to the washing machine *Wes-kin-kaos* to test the product and to count down how many times he could be washed. Pyrotechnic effects simulated the machine's explosion, and props or pieces of the performer's body and clothes went through the air.

It is interesting to consider the fact that *Furol* was a first experience into 'product' selling and advertising,³³ before the 1990s performances devised by the group for multinationals and institutions like Pepsi, Mercedes Benz, Peugeot, Barcelona city hall or El Instituto de Arquitectos. This was part of the multidisciplinary strategies of groups like Els Comediants or Dagoll Dagom to survive within the transformed but difficult theatre market and 'become more pragmatic and competitive' (Saumell 1996, 106), to attract both public funding and private investments. This scene is also recalled for the fact that within the overlapping of the *desencanto* and the PSOE's victory the previous year, the *Furol* sequence parodied a popular, desired cleaning up of corrupt administrative and authoritative habits.

Mòbil Xoc ended with a live pig with angel wings descending from the air to the washing machine, as a pagan and anarchist recreation of Catholic resurrection iconography. Young girls on the terraces around the scenic space threw one thousand one peseta coins over the audience. This grand-finale had direct allusions to Els Comediants and the unpaid performance, besides satirising consumerism, which the group have also joined. After this final scene, a ball in the shape of and decorated as an

³³ My attention was drawn to this in a conversation with my co-supervisor Maria Delgado.

eye was thrown into the audience. The audience's games with the ball echoes practices at rock concerts and functioned as a final participatory moment of the performance.

For Jordi Coca, *Mòbil Xoc* or the 'punkish La Fura dels Baus' was a highlight of Tàrrrega's street theatre festival, standing out amongst the other 'noisy and spectacular bands and parades.'³⁴ Besides stressing the repercussions of La Fura's work in Tàrrrega, Coca was the first critic to relate La Fura and punk. This association was to persist later in the group's history.³⁵

This association also marked another differentiation between the group and Els Comediants' more 'hippie'-permeated aesthetics. Although also influenced by hippie counterculture,³⁶ La Fura's development of a theatrical language also happened within the reference of punk, a pivot of *la movida's* artistic articulations. The *reanimació* cultivated by the group may also be inserted in a wider and generational *desencanto* which reached different parts of the world, exteriorised by punk in New York and Britain in the period following 1975.³⁷ Paul Khera and Maria Beddoes curated and designed the exhibition *Destroy: Punk Graphics Design in Britain* running from 6 February to 16 March 1998 at the Royal Festival Hall in London. The publicity material for the event states that

Punk was an explosion of activity by a generation disillusioned with the empty glitter of glam-rock and the excess of hippy psychedelia which bore no relation to the bleak reality of British suburban and inner-city life. Punk's rebelliousness had a raw energy which unleashed a fervent creativity breaking from the conventions of style and taste, revolutionising music, graphics, fashion, and popular culture. The

³⁴ 'Orquestinas y pasacalles ruidosos y espectaculares'. Jordi Coca, 'Els Comediants y Jean Marc Peytain cierran en Tàrrrega la III Fira del Teatre al Carrer', *El País*, 14 September 1983, p. 25.

³⁵ See Victor L. Oller, 'La ferocidad teatral', *El País*, 18 March 1984, pp. 47-55. Oller affirmed that 'el movimiento *punk* ha llegado también al teatro' (the punk movement has also arrived in theatre), p. 47; Patricia Gabancho, 'Teatro punk con "La Fura dels Baus"', *El Noticiero Universal*, 2 May 1984, p. 26; Xavier Fàbregas, 'La Fura dels Baus, grupo teatral punk, se presenta esta noche en Barcelona', *La Vanguardia*, 2 May 1984, p. 34; Unsigned, 'El grupo La Fura dels Baus estrena hoy un montaje punk en las Drassanes', *El País*, 2 May 1984, p. 28, or J. Ylla, 'El Centre Dramàtic de la Generalitat abre sus puertas al teatro "punk" de La Fura dels Baus', *El Correo Catalan*, 2 May 1984, p. 24.

³⁶ La Fura's performers' and spectators' empathy with the hippie utopia and revolution leads Torre to refer to them in the late 1970s as some of 'the last *progres* from the time of the *progres*' (1992, 30).

³⁷ Legs McNeill and John Holmstrom's magazine *Punk* was released in January 1976 with articles on The Ramones, Lou Reed (a mutually mocking interview) and Marlon Brando, within an eclectic edition looking at New York's underground world.

punk generation had to destroy what went before in order to find a new vocabulary with which they could identify. The designers – art school students, band-members or their friends, often working collaboratively and anonymously – challenged taboos and scorned authority by cutting up images and making irreverent juxtapositions. They used the mundane and the urban – commercial signage and packaging, news print and cartoons – precisely because they were banal and worthless. The crude and immediate techniques – montage, stencilling, photocopying – were devoid of aesthetic veneer and they allowed a spontaneity which promoted continuous redefinition. The designers of this generation led the way to the media literate world of the later 1980s.

The following chapter will show that many of these features summarised by Kheda and Beddoes were visible in the early 1980s' productions of La Fura. Beyond New York or the British suburbs and the unemployed, the movement reached other youths and underwent the 'post-punk', 'new wave' or even 'skinhead' mutations during this progress. The ensemble is an example of both the influence and the mutation that punk underwent in Catalonia and Spain.³⁸ Kheda and Beddoes' summary focuses on the graphic production detonated by the aesthetics of punk and includes music, graphics, fashion and popular culture. Nevertheless, La Gaia Scienza (Italy), Royal de Luxe (France), Vidas Erradas or XPTO (Brazil) or La Fura were also examples of both this punk influence and the search for a new vocabulary within theatre in the early 1980s.

It was La Fura's clothes, hair cuts and musical scores rather than the company's conscious fostering of a punk discourse which were responsible for this association. Bim Mason adds, however, that the *fureros* as with other young groups during the early 1980s 'draw their energy from the revolutionary anger and love of anarchy, which comes out of the bleak wastelands of the high-rise suburbs' (1992, 122). This feature was also manifested in the early films of Almodóvar mentioned earlier in this section.

³⁸ The trajectory of punk in Brazil, for example, may illustrate this mutation. Sons and daughters of PhD students, professors and diplomatic servants living in New York and London during the late 1970s brought punk aesthetics to the Brazilian capital. Brasília had the first punk music bands in Brazil at the same time that the working class youth in São Paulo began revealing its identification with the movement. Crossing the class boundaries, the movement lost much of its initial motivation but this did not erase its rebel drive or the proposal of new values, social codes and aesthetics. The phenomenon in Brazil reveals the postmodern raid on the 'high culture/low culture' binarism by the youth movement as well as the supermodernity's saturation of information and the mood of disenchantment which could be seen across the world at this time.

Antúnez stresses part of this anger in a published interview to Cerezzo after the first performances of *Accions* in Barcelona in 1984 when the *furero* affirmed that 'our theatre is metropolitan, we are urban. We all live in this city, in this shit!' (1984, 52).³⁹ This was a shared domain for punks and other young people who wanted changes in society.

'No future' is the title of one of the songs of the Sex Pistols (*Anarchy in the UK*, 1977) which claimed that this negative perspective had been designed for them by previous generations. It became a catchy-phrase associated with the Sex Pistols branch of punk. Nevertheless, punk signified different things for different artists during the mid-1970s and 1980s. Although the Sex Pistols and part of the youth movement attracted ideas which may have suggested the exclusively nihilistic, pessimistic and uncritical aspects of punk, punk can not be approached as a monologic phenomenon. La Fura, however, argued that the fact they believed in a future isolated them from the movement.⁴⁰ In that sense, La Fura was also privileging a restrictive reading of the movement of which they were to be considered examples in Spain. There were notorious icons of punk who contradict this erroneous (when exclusive) definition of the movement.⁴¹ Therefore, when Coca entitles the company's theatre as 'punkish', and not 'punk', he finds a middle ground in linking the group with the movement, indicating an adoption of the trappings of punk performance, but certainly not defining punk itself.

La Fura and its relations with both the *desencanto* and *movida* moods (or with both the hippie and punk realities) contradict erroneous analyses of social, cultural and youth movements as temporally fixed or geographically delimited. This type of

³⁹ 'El nostre teatre és metropolità, som urbans. Tots vivim en aquesta ciutat, en aquesta merda!'

⁴⁰ 'Los *punkies* [sic] no creen en el futuro, y nosotros sí.' Unsigned, 'La agresividad de La Fura dels Baus llega esta tarde a Oviedo', *La Voz*, Oviedo, 13 March 1987, p. 35.

⁴¹ See the analysis of The Clash's trajectory by Juliá (2000) who contradicts these exclusive ideas with the bands' humour, claims for changes and belief in social and cultural transformations. On the punk movement in Britain and the USA, Davis (1977), Coon (1978), Savage (1992) and McNeill and McCain (1996) are comprehensive sources.

delimitation excludes interconnections amongst these movements, which highlight their differences or transitional phases. This cross-over also characterises a decade, the 1980s, where, as Vicente Verdú designates 'speed and mixtures, the combination, artificial insemination, transplants, the *mestizaje*' (1999, 638) were all played with.⁴² It is not an exaggeration to affirm that Verdú seems to be describing a postmodern panorama which had a clear translation within the arts and sciences through the interdisciplinary crossing and blurring of artistic limits which visibly underlined the 1980s.

Gerard DeGroot calls attention to a generational factor, which is also particularly present in the 18-24 age band, and applies beyond the boundaries of the punk movement. In an article published in 1998, DeGroot points out that students within this age band 'are often at the cutting edge of social radicalism, since they alone possess the sometimes volatile combination of youthful dynamism, naive utopianism, disrespect for authority, buoyant optimism and attraction to adventure, not to mention surplus of spare time.'⁴³ These characteristics were present in many of the young groups and audiences of the TI, *la movida* and the *reanimació*. In this sense, La Fura's *movida* was concretised with *Accions*, but its earlier gestation was articulated within La Fura's *reanimació*.

In Tárrega, *Mòbil Xoc* accentuated the aesthetic differences between La Fura's and Barcelona's street theatre. It also marked an increasing press and public response to the group's work. During the Tárrega Festival, Cerezzo criticised all Catalan street theatre groups excepting La Fura for a lack of innovation, 'because all of them did the same: the same bands [...] which played the same music [...] demonstrating circus

⁴² 'Los ochenta jugaron con la velocidad y las mixturas, la combinación, los injertos, la inseminación artificial, los trasplantes, el mestizaje.'

⁴³ Gerard DeGroot, 'Lessons in Empowerment', *The Scotsman*, Edinburgh, 12 April 1998, p. 13.

techniques' (1983, 52).⁴⁴ The repetition or influence of Els Comediants' model did not always generate an equal amount of originality and creativity. According to Torre, after that production, 'all Tàrrrega knew they had passed by. [...] They were the most modern and daring, and the ones who would give the last word in terms of *animació*, even though they began to tire of performing it' (1992, 45).⁴⁵ Nevertheless, the group was also motivated by the positive response to *Mòbil Xoc* in Tàrrrega. Gatell and Ollé went to Sitges to survey a possible participation of the show at the forthcoming XVI Festival in October 1983.

The Festival's programme was closed. In an unpublished interview with the author, Gatell alleges that the festival's director Ricard Salvat did not want the group in Sitges. Salvat alleged a lack of theatre venues or performance spaces. Gatell and Ollé, however, found a modern and dark pedestrian subway under the train tracks, that Gatell describes as a bare cement walled bunker.⁴⁶

The two *fureros* had a creative brainstorm at the bunker, visualising different scenes with spectators and performers sharing that closed space. Gatell and Ollé then visited the offices of the festival organisers, the city mayor and the Spanish train network, RENFE. In each office, they lied that the two other parties involved had already agreed to the premiere of La Fura's new show in the space. Through this performative act, the ensemble was scheduled in the "off-programme" of the Festival, performing *Mòbil Xoc* in the streets of Sitges on 23 October 1983, and *Accions* at the RENFE pedestrian subway a day earlier.

⁴⁴ 'Una crítica global mereixen gairebé tots els grups catalans de cercaviles. Global, puix que tots feien el mateix: les mateixes bandes... que tocaven la mateixa musica [...] demonstrators de tècniques de circ...'

⁴⁵ 'Tot Tàrrrega sabés que havien passat per allà. [...] Ells eren els més moderns, els més agosarats i els que havien de dir l'última paraula en matèria de cercaviles, més encara perquè ja començaven a estar cansat de fer-ne.'

⁴⁶ Barcelona, 29 April 1998.

Accions was a non-existent work, scheduled to open in just a month and as yet unconceived. It provoked a divided reaction within La Fura. Some of the *fureros* found the prospect of the new show for Sitges a dangerous risk just at a moment when the group was increasing its public and critical popularity in Catalonia. Other *fureros* confirmed their commitment towards this implicit change, keen to move away from their earlier street theatre.

The discussion about the issue again exteriorised the aesthetic and economic crisis experienced by the group which had motivated the *reanimació*. The street performances were both draining and underpaid: all of the *fureros* had to deal with unpaid bills and landlords dismissing them for late payments. This circumstantial contingency was amplified as a significant problem in the schizophrenic contrast between the demands of urban life and the exhausting conditions of their festive performances in different cities. Nevertheless, they did not wish to perform in theatre buildings either. All of them, with the exception of Ollé, did not wish to move towards acquiring the skills required for the staging of written plays. For the majority of them, the 'dead theatre' performed in conventional spaces was another façade of the *desencanto* in its passive audiences and lack of alternatives.

The company was united around *Accions* as a means of finding a creative and professional exit for their aesthetic contradictions and economic problems. The *fureros* sought to amplify their *reanimació* street theatre into an impact theatre which negated the element of the humorous festivity which had become increasingly innocuous in a social mood saturated by *el desencanto*. A deliberately frightening spectacle was the option favoured by the company as a statement against the personal, artistic, Catalan and Spanish disenchantment. The main stimuli were to scare and move the audience, and to experiment with plastic materials and indoor spaces. In an unpublished interview

with the author, Gatell points out that it was a way of shaking the foundations not only of the theatrical event but the whole undesirable *desencanto*.⁴⁷

The democratic transition and the general support for González's economic policies promoted a shift towards strengthening regional governments' authority in regards to local policies. The ruling was 'a significant victory for the autonomies over the central PSOE administration' (Graham and Labanyi 1995, 439). Besides the so-called historic autonomies (Basque Country, Catalonia and Galicia), autonomy was granted to all the country's regions. John Hooper recalls that 'the *estado de las autonomías* [state of autonomies] was by far the most determined and comprehensive attempt ever made by the Spanish to resolve the internal tensions that have plagued their modern history' (1995, 428). At the time of the opening of *Accions* in 1983, 'one of the most centralized nations on earth', continues Hooper, 'had been carved into seventeen self-governing administrative units, each with its own flag and capital' (1995, 48).

Cerezzo seems to be the only published review of the first version of *Accions* (1984, enlarged in his 1986 article). He mentions a *cercavila* of the *fureros* dressed in green overalls and welder helmets, playing wind and percussion instruments to bring spectators to the pedestrian subway. Once inside, the spectators saw the bare cement walls and a large piece of paper hung vertically in front of one of the walls.

The audience heard synthesizers creating a dense atmosphere framed by the sound of trains passing by outside. A first sequence of firework explosion startled the spectators:

The pyrotechnics are no longer gratuitous: the explosions inside that cement resonance box afflict the spectators. The mud men emerge from the smoke; the hand which previously had a trumpet, now had an axe and caused panic...

The actions are always at the ground level. The actors run through the spectators, who turned into spectator-actors. Movement, action and panic provoke a continuous

⁴⁷ Barcelona, 29 April 1998.

tension within the conjunct of actors and spectators. The noise music, the screams of the spectators and the synthesiser music inundate the sonic space. The olfactory space is saturated with the smell of powder. [...]

Blackout and silence.

Two bodies wrapped in plastic materials appear hung in two climbers roped together near the ceiling of the pedestrian subway. The tension is removed from the ground to the gravity-less space created by the suspended bodies and the lights... On the ground, there is a moment of relief, the tranquillity seems to be foreseen. The bodies move alongside the ropes. The plastic poetry, the aerial bodies, lights, shadows and music enhance the relaxation... The bodies stop advancing, the performers plug off from the ropes, banging against the wall. Multicoloured paintings come out of the broken bags of paint in the big paper screen which covers the cemented wall. The actors slip down through the wall to the ground and disappear. Blackout (1984, 52; 1986, 56-7).⁴⁸

Cerezzo recalls that amongst the numerous reviews of the Sitges festival's performances, only two articles and one short review mentioned La Fura (1986, 57). Nevertheless, this sole performance in Sitges gained the group a support directly related to the changes in the cultural administrations within the new powers of the autonomies. Culture was significant part of González's strategies in enterprising a dynamic, changing, and competitive country which might attract foreigner investments and partnership. Each autonomy stressed its own funding strategies based on their specific cultural values. The strategies of expansion of the Centre Dramàtic de la Generalitat from 1982 to 1988 aimed at the rescue of Catalan authors but emphasised an international repertoire and experimental productions. In the hope of fostering the latter, the CDG created the Cicle del Teatre Obert (Open Theatre Festival) in Barcelona. Hermann Bonnin, the CDG's director saw the embryonic version of *Accions* in Sitges and invited the group to be part of the 1984 Open Theatre programme.

⁴⁸ 'La pirotècnia deixa de ser gratuïta: les explosions, dins aqueixa caixa de ressonància de formigó, angoixen el públic; del fum surten els homes de fang; una torxa, ocupant la mà que abans portava una trompeta, causa el pànic... Les accions són sempre a nivell de terra. Els actors corren per entre els espectadors, que han deixat de ser ho per a esdevenir espectadors-actors. Moviment, acció, pànic, la tensió del conjunt d'actors i espectadors és contínua. Els sons produïts copejant claveques i baranes, els crits dels espectadors, la música dels sintetitzadors inunden l'espai sonor. L'espai olfatiu és saturat amb l'olor de la pólvora. [...] De dues cordades paral·leles a terra, pengen dos cossos, que s'endevinen humans, envoltats en materials plàstics. La tensió ha passat del terra a l'espai ingràvit creat pels cossos i els focus... A baix, un moment de respir, s'endevina la calma. Els cossos avancen per les cordes. Relaxament per la poesia plàstica: cossos ingràvits, llums, ombres, música... Els cossos deixen d'avançar, es despengen, s'esclafen contra la paret. Pinturas de mil colors surten de bosses reventades i taquen la gran peça de paper que cobreix el mur de formigó. Els actors s'arrosseguen pel mur i arriben a terra, desapareixen. Fosc.'

The first performance of *Accions* in Sitges was the embryonic move towards a *lenguaje furero* and the launch of the second period of La Fura's trajectory. The following chapter will examine in further detail the definitive version, *Accions, Alteració Física d'un Espai* (*Actions, Physical Alteration of a Space*, 1984-87). It embraced and re-worked all the first scenes performed in Sitges and also included new ones. The temporal scope proposed by this chapter terminates in 1983 but *Accions* did not mean a sudden break with the group's previous productions, which were still performed during 1984. Neither can it be claimed that *Accions* achieved an artistic interdisciplinarity without previous incursions of the company towards it. Although the following chapters on the first trilogy constitute the field for this thesis to probe this hypothesis, some initial considerations may be raised here.

4.3. Afterwords

From its inception and first productions as a theatre music group, La Fura demonstrated a multidisciplinary artistic interest. Influenced by the cross-disciplinarity which marked the historical vanguards and the alternative theatre movements such as the TI or Els Joglars and Els Comediants' interdisciplinary productions, the group was gradually developing the idea of a theatrical language which privileged artistic cross-examination. Overlapping with the interplays of ritual and festive tendencies in the late 1960s and the early 1970s theatre, performance art and other media were adding elements to the 1980s retheatricalisation. It has to be recalled that for the generation who grew up during the 1960s and 1970s in different parts of the Western world, theatre carried a series of conservative associations. In a published interview with Richard Eyre, the Quebecois performer and director Robert Lepage states that

I've never been interested in theatre as such. In my adolescence I was more interested in theatricality. I think the taste for young creators, actors or directors, in Quebec, at least in the seventies, came much more from seeing rock shows, dance shows,

performance art, than from seeing theatre, because theatre is not as accessible here as it is here in Britain (1996, 238).

Not only because of the elitist aspect of the traditional practices, an intermedia, extra-theatrical inspiration or artistically interdisciplinary potential permeated the processes, works-in-progress and performances of different theatre creators in the main cities of Spain, Catalonia, Quebec, Canada, Britain, Japan or Brazil during the 1980s. Valentina Valentini points out that the theatrical generation of the late 1970s searched for a theatre outside of theatres, privileging visual sources from the history of art and cinema, jazz, rock, literature, poetry, anthropology and psychoanalysis (1991, 12-13).

The pre-history of La Fura interacted with diverse ideas of theatricality and methodologies launched by the TI. These might be superficially absorbed or spontaneously crossed with other experiences and readings of theatricality in the learning process of the group in the streets of either Barcelona or Catalan villages. It often happened because of the lack of disciplinary and epistemological prejudices in the theatrical experimentations of the ensemble. La Fura's different levels of studies and skills, self-indulgence, spontaneity, chance, scenic histrionics, curiosity, play, chance and intuition link both the pre-history and the first trilogy's period further.

After this first period (1979-83), each process had its own development and specific circumstances which kept on changing across throughout the 1980s. Notwithstanding, the ensemble's methodology of work employed within the first trilogy maintained the methodological features of the pre-history. An initial period of storage and exposition of insights, themes and materials triggered improvisations which were further elaborated in subsequent sessions. The improvisational phases gradually selected an order of actions to be experimented with and polished towards a first montage or scenic sequence. A penultimate period of the creative process was

undertaken *in situ* and the negotiations with each space's conditions and advantages altered the scenic montage or collage.

The final phase was undertaken with and amongst the spectators. During this whole devising and improvising process, the actors evaluated each other. It may be noted that *Accions* and *Suz/o/Suz* maintained a predominance of conflictive scenes with or between couples and trios which facilitated the directorial outside eye of those not participating in the scene. This was part of the shared collective directing, design and writing of the productions which were then performed by their authors. La Fura's methodology during the pre-history and first trilogy kept this collective creative work which TI groups like Els Joglars or Els Comediants had experienced and then abandoned, turning into professional companies directed by one person (Albert Boadella and Joan Font).

During and after the pre-history, La Fura was building up the competence that may currently attract international invitations from different art media, city halls and multinationals. In an unpublished interview with the author in Barcelona after the first dress rehearsal of *Ombra* (1998) on 27 November 1998, Hansel Cereza drew attention to a constant evolution with varying degrees of intensity from the early *cercaviles* of the first *fureros* up to their current multiple activities at the end of 1998. Cereza, therefore, contradicts the insignificance allied to the so-called pre-history of the group by himself and his colleagues. The first period of the group appears to have pre-set its artistic interdisciplinarity through the cross-reprocessing of their influences and plural insights.

In one of the few published allusions to the embryonic version of *Accions* in Sitges, Francesc Cerezo acknowledged the possibility of a path for La Fura, distinct from 'una fauna d'imitadors dels Comediants' (Els Comediants' imitative fauna) (1983b, 102). This possibility was turned into reality when *Accions* was performed, inside a building in Drassanes, near Barcelona's harbour, which had been abandoned

while still in the process of being constructed. The pre-history seems to have been ignored by the *fureros* and the majority of critics, but whether this first period constructed the bridge for La Fura's artistic interdisciplinarity is a conclusion that can only be endorsed after examining the first trilogy.

CHAPTER 5

THE FIRST TRILOGY

Introduction

Chapter 5 examines La Fura's second period (1984-89) through the description and analysis of *Accions* (1984-87), *Suz/o/Suz* (1985-91) and *Tier Mon* (1988-90). These three scenic montages comprised the example of a specific dramaturgy, not anchored in written texts but in performance texts. The performance texts of La Fura's first trilogy may aid this study in examining the structural, methodological or creative principles of the company's scenic constructions: the three productions will guide the analysis of artistic interdisciplinarity and La Fura throughout the subsequent chapters of this thesis.

The first section of this chapter presents the first trilogy of La Fura, describing its productions in some detail. The section also comments on La Fura's play of meanings within these three productions. The second section considers the concept of performance texts as well as some constructive principles in contemporary dramaturgies such as the one promoted by La Fura during the 1980s. Both sections allow this chapter to deal with La Fura's trajectory during its second period as well as with the ensemble's methodological and creative processes from 1984 to 1989.

5.1. Productions

According to the *Manifiesto Canalla (Swinish Manifest)*¹ released in May 1984 during the first performances of *Accions* in Barcelona,

F.D.B. [Fura dels Baus] – It's not a social phenomenon, it is not just a group, it's not a circle of close friends, it's not an association pro-anything.

¹ Francesch (1988) translates it as 'Dirty Manifesto'. *Canalla* in Catalan also has the meaning of a group of children but the Manifesto was written and released in Castilian. La Fura's use of Castilian was part of the provocative group's performativity which will be approached in both this and the following chapters.

F.D.B. – It's a criminal in today's cultural scene.

F.D.B. – It's the result of the symbiosis of ten peculiar and well differentiated elements supporting themselves mutually in its development.

F.D.B. – It's closer to the self-definition of fauna than to the standard model of citizen.

F.D.B. – It's a theater of non-ruled behaviour and without any preconceived trajectory. It works as a mechanical engine and generates activity by pure necessity and empathy.

F.D.B. – It has nothing to do with the past. It doesn't learn from the traditional fountains and doesn't like pre-manufactured and modern folklore.

F.D.B. – It produces theater by means of constant interferences between both: intuition + investigation.

F.D.B. – It experiments alive. Each action represents a practical exercise on aggressive playing against the stillness of the spectator, it makes an irruption to impact and alterate the usual relationship between spectator and spectacle (Francesch 1988, 23)

The *fureros* released their *Manifest* aiming to publicly articulate their aesthetic principles which *Accions* was presenting. Quick categorisations could not and cannot encapsulate either *la movida* or the multiple facets of the punk movement and their continuous mutation within postmodernism. Superficial research, sensationalism or an interest in selling more newspapers guided the press's formulation of labels for La Fura: the press's categorisations engendered a 'punk and violent image' which was insistently associated with and yet denied by the company, as also suggested by Albert de la Torre (1992, 55).

This engendering in the main newspapers of Spain and Catalonia was a publicity pre-set that drew popular attention to the first run of *Accions* in Barcelona. Establishing the aesthetic cogitations of the group, the *Manifest* made up part of this publicity pre-set. This and the subsequent chapters provide a chance to examine the group's cogitations described in the *Manifest*. It was released in the first run in Barcelona in May 1984, after an open rehearsal (or public test) of *Accions* in Tarragona on 18 February 1984. Both Sitges and Tarragona's try-outs initiated a strategy that is still utilised by the group.²

² *ØBS*, the seventh work of the *lenguaje furero*, had its world premiere in Brussels on 1 May 2000. The production had a public test in a sports gymnasium in Grannolers, near Barcelona, on 14 and 15 April 2000. The performed version was entitled *Tengrit*.

Open rehearsals are barometers employed by groups and artists to improve and evaluate the performance before the production's official showing. The spatial and relational proposal of the *lenguaje furero* demands rehearsals with sample audiences because of the significant role that these audiences will share with the performers. In a published interview in 1985, the group comment that 'our way of work and methodology [...] oblige us to put our montage before an audience before shaping a definitive form.'³ After testing and changing their creation, the *fureros* opened the first run of *Accions* in Barcelona from 3 to 8 May 1984 inside the abandoned Drassanes building.⁴

Entering the deteriorated, dark and wide space of the building, the audience could see a small stage with some instruments, an old car in the centre of the space and a 16 x 4 meters white plastic screen hung up vertically. Claudia Gianetti (1998) and Marcel·lí Antúnez name *Accions* as a 'performance-spectacle' summarised as:

seven linked actions done in performance format with music. Apart from the musicians, all the performers work on the ground, among the spectators.

1 A saxophone concert with voice and synthesisers, starts the performance.⁵

2 Three [semi] naked men covered in mud move through the audience, eating raw eggs, and then disappear with a large drum.⁶

3 Two men in suits [Antúnez and Pep Gatell] destroy a wall in the process of being built, and smash up a car using sledgehammers and axes;⁷ specially designed fireworks are set off in the venue.⁸

³ 'Nuestra forma de trabajo y metodología [...] nos obliga necesariamente a tener que contrastar con público nuestros montajes antes de darles una forma definitiva'. In unsigned, 'La Fura dels Baus en Àfrica', *El Noticiero Universal*, Barcelona, 24 April 1985, p. 41.

⁴ It has to be recalled that the Drassanes building existed in an area that is completely different from the current harbour area Barcelona. The 1990s urban reform before and after the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games conspicuously altered this deteriorated industrial area.

⁵ The words '*mira*' (see it!) and '*sida*' (aids) shouted by Miki Espuma and Carles Padrís punctuated the first composition, '*Mira*'. The recorded instructions, the screams and firework noises which preceded the initial music '*Mira*', as well as the whole sound tracking composed for *Accions* are recorded on the CD which takes its title from the production. The CD was remastered and digitalized by Espuma and Big Toxic, and released by the group in 1997.

⁶ Hansel Cereza, Jürgen Müller and Àlex Ollé emerged from the floor and wore skin-colour jockstraps.

⁷ These characters/allegories were called *fakirs* or modifiers by the group.

⁸ Six rounds of twenty-five shots each, automatic firework dispositives and other different pyrotechnic effects erupted loudly and simultaneously in different areas of the ruined building during approximately four minutes. Volumes of smoke filled the air, lit by red filtered spots. Besides their own experience with fireworks during the pre-history, the *fureros* contacted different experts from Catalonia and Valencia to concretise the scene without real danger. Notwithstanding, Cerezo gives an idea of the befitting title of the scene (*Kaos*), when he describes the spectators running and 'leaving their shoes and bags in the way. [...] They randomly occupied the whole space, moving in disoriented and centrifugal displacements trying to avoid the pyrotechnic siege' ('deixen sabates i bosses. [...] Ocupen desordenadament tot l'espai, i desorientats, es mouen en desplaçaments centrífugs intentant trencar el setge pirotècnic') (1986, 84).

4 A man wearing buskins and covered in white paste moves toward a large white canvas placed on one of the walls of the venue.⁹

5 The men who have been destroying the car cover the two mud-covered men with blue and black paint and chase them through the audience, throwing soup pasta at them.

6 Two men [Jordi Arús and Pere Tantinyà] swing down on cables [and perform an aerial dance before heading] to the white canvas, where their bodies, covered in transparent plastic, burst into red.

7 The plastic-covered men and the white man execute a body/paint performance in front of the large canvas, which becomes stained with red (1998, 79).¹⁰

Accions continued touring Spain throughout 1984. The first international performances of *Accions* happened in Marseille, France on 26 June 1984, and as part of the first edition of the Latin-American Theatre Festival in Córdoba, Argentina from 24 to 27 October 1984. The last performance of *Accions* happened in 1987, after 143 performances for 76.000 spectators.¹¹

La Fura began preparing *Suz/o/Suz* in the first months of 1985. Antúnez describes to Giannetti that the move between both plays 'took place in a natural, continuous fashion' (1998, 32). Noticing that the group of actions of the previous work had produced a narrative for many spectators, the ensemble aimed at maintaining the object-based, pictorial and musical work but 'more orderly, more dependent on the performer' (1998, 31). In an interview with Salvador Francesch during the rehearsal process of *Suz/o/Suz*, Andrés Morte stated that 'we accept then that if the first show was a sort of instinctive aggressiveness, then in the second one we will be more magical, more ritualistic and more primitive' (1988 [1985], 20). For Morte, a uniformity and

⁹ Müller always moved in a straight direction, repeating a short absurdist poem by Joachim Ringelnatz.

¹⁰ There were other colours like brown, green and blue, before Antúnez and Gatell came back with a water-hose and washed down the characters and the canvas. Antúnez and Gianetti also enlisted the production and management of Mercè Illa and Andrés Morte who was also indicated as creative drafter. Ramón Rey and Pablo J. Loyzaga were responsible respectively for the lighting and sound design, following the conceptual draft of the *fureros*. After acknowledging the production of the CDG and La Fura, the authors list the props ('1 white canvas sheet measuring 14 x 6 m, 2 axes, 2 sledgehammers, torches, 3 drums, 2 ceiling cables, stage for the musicians'), perishable material ('1 car per performance, 200 litres of paint, grey mud, 40 kilos of soup pasta, sawdust, fireworks') and venues ('disused industrial buildings, factories, markets, abandoned slaughterhouses, churches, jails... between 600 and 1.500 m², 50 kw of electric power') (1998, 79). The web page of the group <http://www.lafura.com> presents edited videos of the seven productions of the *lenguaje furero* and general information about the other works of the ensemble.

¹¹ Gonzalo Pérez d'Olager, 'La Fura dels Baus caricaturiza al poder', *El Periódico*, 17 November 1994, p. 54. The web page of the group also provided this data.

unification of ideas, character, dress and political thoughts, via an over-valued commercial and urban industrial ideology, created a state of lethargy which increased the need for identification that could be reached through ritual (1988, 18-19).

The embryonic version of *Suz/o/Suz* was entitled *Dame un Hueso, Nuba* (*Give me a bone, Nuba*). It was premiered on 23 and 24 April 1985, in KGB, a dance club in Barcelona. The show presented some prototype scenes which were elaborated further after these first public tests.¹² On 30 August 1985, *Suz/o/Suz* opened in an old morgue in Madrid.

The alleged reason for this voluntary exile from Barcelona was the lack of financial support by the Catalan Generalitat. The critical and public response to *Accions* motivated the group to lobby repeatedly for a supposedly deserved attention from the cultural departments of Barcelona.¹³ However, the financial support for the new production came from Guillermo Heras and the Centro de Nuevas Tendencias Escénicas (National Centre of New Scenic Tendencies, CNNTE), created in Madrid to aid new authors and groups.¹⁴ To be in the pivotal focus of the creative, inclusive and anarchic effervescence and performativities of *la movida* was another reason for the move to Madrid.

The press release of *Suz/o/Suz* depicted the experience of the group with the Mesakim tribe of the village Bir Okwork in Dar Nouba, Sudan. The experience was

¹² For short descriptions of this version, see Santiago Fondevilla, 'Dame un hueso nuba', *La Vanguardia*, 25 April 1985, p. 32, or Eva Huarte, 'El insólito espectáculo de la Fura dels Baus', *El Noticiero Universal*, 25 April 1985, p. 24.

¹³ The professional Catalan theatre received financial support from the Generalitat of 139.731.000 pesetas in 1985, an effective doubling of the previous year's figures. Whilst the Teatre Lliure received 22.000.000 pesetas, groups like Els Joglars, Els Comediants, La Cubana, Dagoll-Dagom, La Claca and others shared 46.830.000. Els Joglars' Albert Boadella protested that the 10.650.000 pesetas his group received covered only 12% of his group's annual demands. La Fura and Vol-Ras were some of the nine other groups which shared 6.200.000 pesetas. La Fura received 850.000 pesetas. The group alleged that in relation to the one hundred performances of *Accions* so far, the money resulted in 8.500 pesetas for each show, that after being distributed amongst the group members would enable each of them to be able to afford to pay for a sandwich and a beer. See unsigned, 'El teatre català professional rebrà gairebé 140 millions', *Avui*, 8 August 1985, p. 1, and A.F., 'Casi 140 millones para el teatro profesional', *El Correo Catalan*, Barcelona, 8 August 1985, p. 5. On the published complaints of La Fura see Goncalvez Perez d'Olague, 'La Generalitat dobla la ayuda al teatro profesional catalán', *El Periódico*, Barcelona, 25 August 1985, p. 32.

¹⁴ For an introduction on the CNNTE, see Marquerie (1984).

supposed to have grounded the rehearsal process for the group's new production. It was false information deliberately released by La Fura and taken to be true by different critics (Ferrer 1987; Ragué-Arias 1988; Korver 1991). Esperança Ferrer also documented the equally false premiere in the train station of Abu Zabat in August 1985.

This attitude of the group may be associated with their youthful anarchism. The false information delivered to the press was part of the group's performativity, which was mindful of the media's potential to provide (or not) visibility for emergent groups.¹⁵ The ensemble's disrespect for the authorities included the press and La Fura was playing with its public image and mocking the veracity and documentation of press critics. The group reinforced its distrust of the legitimacy of the word on and off stage.

This performativity was also composed by the public try-outs of their productions or by artistic pre-performances in open spaces to generate public and media attention.¹⁶ Before the first performances in Barcelona in January 1986, Jordi Arúz semi-naked and covered in fat was hung from a steel cable between the towers of the Plaça d'Espanya, forty-five meters above the floor. The action called attention to *Suz/o/Suz* in Barcelona;

¹⁵ This performativity and the group's behaviour with the press reached a pinnacle with *MTM* in 1994. The maintenance of power through the manipulation of information was the anticipated theme of the fifth *lenguaje furero* production. A press conference with European journalists before the opening in the 1994 Lisbon Expo was set inside a truck. The truck left the Expo place and TV screens showed the outside images during the journey while the interview was undertaken. Affirming that they were not the *fureros* but hired actors, questions such as 'What is your objective?' or 'What does La Fura mean?' were respectively replied with 'Birmania', or with 'What a good question. Nobody has ever asked it.' This cynical reply was a protest against the work of the journalists: La Fura usually provides these with abundant press-releases which cover the history of the group as well as the current production detailed in aesthetic concerns and objectives. At the end of the interview, the journalists realised that the truck had not moved from the place where they had got in. The impotence against manipulation was counter-attacked with further manipulation. See Ana Bela Martins da Cruz, 'Tripas, fígado e coração', *Diário de Notícias*, Lisbon, 9 March 1994, p. 31. For an analysis of *MTM*, see Feldman (1998).

¹⁶ The *fureros* assaulted public points in Madrid and Barcelona with short performances of a battle ground before the opening of *Tier Mon* in both cities. Before the performances of the trilogy in the Mercat de les Flors, the press conference on 1 December 1988 took place inside and around a dry well behind the Museum of Archaeology in Barcelona. Only the heads of the *fureros* replying to the journalists outside and around the well were visible over strips of lawn, turf and dry leaves within the round pool. The production which opened the second trilogy in 1990, *Noun*, had mechanical placentas set in cranes which delivered the performers into diverse public spaces of Madrid and Barcelona before the premiere. On 20 September 1994, for *MTM*, the *fureros* occupied seven coffins in the centre of Madrid with funereal music coming from a tape recorder. The internal walls of the coffins were covered with cultural press cuttings. Besides divulging the new production, *MTM*, the group was protesting against the lack of space for the arts on the newspapers' front pages. Later, the 150 boxes of the production were used to build a wall between Barcelona's City Hall and the Palau de la Generalitat on 8 October 1994 before the opening in Barcelona.

at the same time the space in the press was used to make new complaints about the lack of support and demands for equivalent funding to other theatre collectives.¹⁷

When the spectators entered the space of the old funerary in Madrid, a strong smell coming from the remains of an animal's ribs over dying embers filled the air.¹⁸ There was a general white wash of a service light at low intensity but no visible actors. At the bottom of the building, an elevated and large stage contained – for newcomers who had not seen *Accions* – the apparently abandoned paraphernalia of a rock concert: keyboards, guitars, percussion, wind instruments and old barrels. A metal fence isolated this stage from the area between the stage and the entrance door.

Two scaffolding towers symmetrically distant from each other crossed the space. According to Cynthia Carr who reviewed the production in London in 1986, 'murky puddles half-covered the floor. [...] I noted the two square platforms, each about six feet tall [...] A must to avoid, I decided. Because those of us "in our party clothes" would do well to stand to the outside, as a woman's voice announced. A lot of good that was gonna do.'¹⁹ After some minutes of waiting, both a blackout and the sudden sound of metal banging around the spectators startled the audience.

The sound came from the mechanical movements of the materials employed in six kinetic sculptures, lit zenithally and distributed near the walls which surrounded the inner space of the funerary.²⁰ The materials were wood, metal, glass pieces, metal sticks and cans. All the sculptures had a bike wheel and a 220 volts motor that provided the mechanical moves and different patterns of sound. Each piece had a different object to

¹⁷ See Joana Bonet, 'La Fura', *La Mañana*, Lleida, 6 January 1986, p.22; F.F., "'Suz o suz", lo último del impactante colectivo teatral', *La Vanguardia*, 18 January 1986, p. 30, or Gonçalves Perez d'Olager, 'La Fura dels Baus lleva el martes a Montjuïc su "violencia onírica"', *El Periódico*, 18 January 1986, p. 43.

¹⁸ This beginning was documented by Moisés Pérez Coterillo (1985, 8). It did not happen when the author saw *Suz/o/Suz* in São Paulo in 1991. The *fureros* adapted themselves and the work to the diverse specific circumstances, without altering their choreographed creations or time duration. The three performances of *Accions* in Cordoba in 1984, for instance, had televisions and fridges to be destroyed instead of old cars (which were too expensive for both the festival organisers and the group's budget).

¹⁹ C. Carr, 'The Audience Saved from Drowning', *Village Voice*, 2 September 1986, p. 79.

²⁰ On kinetic art, see Brett (1968).

compose both sound and form: a tambourine, a bottle, a torch, a drum or a destroyed banjo.

The group called these musical, electromechanical, sculptural objects 'Automàtics'.²¹ Carr describes 'a machine banging a snare drum, another machine gripping a torch that made quick circles in the air', remarking that 'already the mood was tense' (1986, 79). This overture was described by Antúnez and Giannetti as part of

a

multidiscipline [sic] stage action, carried out on the ground, among the audience, and on fixed stage modules, with mechanical mobile elements (trolleys, baths and other items). Electromechanical machine sounds (*Automàtics*) [sic] are included.

1 A concert of *Automàtics*, six electromechanical machines, located on the perimeter of the performance space.²²

2 Eight performers swing down from various ropes to the ground and begin a dance among the audience using supermarket trolleys, working motors, drums and a butane gas canister.²³

3 Musical concert.

4 Two men [Gatell and Tantinyà] appear among the audience on trolleys pushed by two performers [Antúnez and Padrís]. The two princes] are eating raw entrails and drinking wine; then they fight, using flour bombs, and bathe themselves in blood.

5 Two [naked] acolytes submerged in transparent swimming pools [Arús (or Wagland) and Müller], are manipulated and extracted from their foetal containers by their masters [Cereza and Ollé].²⁴

6 A celebration of liquid among the audience, carried out by all the performers, using buckets, trolleys and moving bathtubs.

7 Ritual of initiation with the bodies of the acolytes, who are suspended in two towers or 'slices', using liquids, pigments, flour, straw and food. There follows a coda, using the *Automàtics* (1998, 80).²⁵

²¹ An installation exhibited the six *Automàtics* in Madrid's Teatro Español in 1988. See Giannetti (1998, 81).

²² Before the next action, two musicians (Espuma and invited guitar player Leo Mariño) begin a percussion solo on a large, elevated stage. The LP *Suz* (Virgin, 1986) contains all the musical compositions from the production.

²³ Four white, zenithal lights fade in to this entrance. The performers were wearing white long-sleeved shirts, black trainers, ties and flesh colour jockstraps. Undressed to the jockstraps, the performers and their objects form a chain moving to the large stage, where the next action begins and some of them dance whilst others join in as instrumentalists and vocalists.

²⁴ The acolytes breathed through air-hoses.

²⁵ The initiated men or new warriors reproduced the beginning of the previous combat scene, interrupted by an apparent final blackout.

Giannetti and Antúnez mention the same performers, production and management, creative drafter and lighting design of *Accions* plus the 'guest creators/performers' Leo Mariño, Vidi Vidal and John Wagland, the sound design of Juan Cid and the stage help of Andreu Polo. After acknowledging the production of *Veranos de la Villa de Madrid*, *CNTE* and *La Fura*, the authors list the props used in the show ('2 trolleys, 2 bathtubs, 2 transparent pools holding 1.200 litres, 2 stage towers, supermarket trolleys, drums, a car wheel, a car motor, and a mechanical chainsaw with open exhaust. A stage for the musicians measuring 12 x 6 m'), perishable material ('40 kilos of flour, 20 kilos of entrails, fresh fruit, 1 bale of straw, 1 bag of corn ears, pigments and other elements'). 'Abandoned industrial spaces, sports pavilions, abandoned premises, funeral parlours, etcetera' with '600 m², 120 kw of electric power' are the venues for *Suz/o/Suz* (1998, 80). The Biblioteca Nacional de Catalunya has a video of a special programme from Catalan TV 3 (1986) which broadcast the full performance of *Suz/o/Suz*.

Suz/o/Suz was performed 301 times around Western and Eastern Europe, the Americas, Israel, Australia and Japan from 1985 to 1996 (mainly 1985-1991), for 217.195 spectators. During late 1980s and early 1990s, two casts had to be rehearsed to perform *Suz/o/Suz* and *Accions*, responding to an international demand for the production. La Fura's increasing presence in European festivals was consistently noticed. This international response gained the attention of the cultural departments of the Generalitat. Although the *normalització* privileged literary dramaturgies in Catalan, the group's audio-visual productions were achieving an international visibility which interested Catalonia's claims of more autonomic rights based on a different language, history and culture.²⁶ This visibility, the vanguard association attributed to the group, the vigorous and popular performances and their young audiences composed a suitable and exportable image of an equally dynamic, renewed nation.

Within the previously mentioned policies of the PSOE, Madrid did not ignore this suitability either.²⁷ The Centro de Documentación Teatral del Ministerio de Cultura (Theatre Documentation Centre of the Ministry of Culture) acknowledged that amongst five hundred companies in 1987 – Els Joglars, Els Comediants, La Fura and Dagoll Dagom were some of the twenty companies which had achieved a stable place in the Spanish market.²⁸ During that year and before the opening of *Tier Mon* in 1988, *Accions*

²⁶ In a published interview with Francesc Burguet i Ardiaca in 1988, La Fura complained about the insufficient 850.000, 900.000 and 2.000.000 pesetas they had received from the Generalitat, respectively in 1985, 1986 and 1987. See Ardiaca, 'La Fura dels Baus, la fricció a l'origen de la ficció', *El Món*, 18 February 1988, pp. 17-20. The Generalitat sponsored a new international tour in 1986 through seven cities of Holland, Germany, France and England with 2.000.000 pesetas. See unsigned, 'La Generalitat subvenciona con dos millones a la Fura dels Baus', *La Vanguardia*, 14 June 1986, p. 39. La Fura had their funds gradually increased by the Generalitat, although it was still considered insufficient. In 1989, whilst the Teatre Lliure, Condal, Teatreneu and Malic shared 121.000.000, Dagoll-Dagom received 60.000.000, Comediants 12.000.000 and La Fura 10.000.000. See Santiago Fondevilla, 'La Generalitat ha destinado hasta al momento mil doscientos millones para el teatro catalán', *La Vanguardia*, 22 June 1989, p. 56.

²⁷ The group received 4.000.000 pesetas from the Ministry of Culture for a new tour through the USA, Israel and Western Europe. See Redacción, 'El Ministerio de Cultura responde a la pregunta formulada en el Congreso', *ABC*, 16 January 1988, p. 85. Fondevilla points out that in 1989 Catalonia was the autonomy which spent most money on theatre in Spain, affirming that theatre was the artistic creation which achieved the biggest projection outside the country. See Santiago Fondevilla, 'La Generalitat subvenciona al teatro con 227 pesetas por habitante', *La Vanguardia*, 19 May 1990, p. 45.

²⁸ See Redacción Madrid, 'Augmenta el pressupost teatral dels governs locals i autonòmics', *Diari de Barcelona*, 17 August 1987, p. 21.

and *Suz/o/Suz* were included in international tours or 'cultural ventures' entirely sponsored by the Ministry of Culture.²⁹

Tier Mon was co-produced by Spanish, Catalan and Western European institutions and festivals.³⁰ Although the group did not stop pressurising the Barcelona and Madrid administrations for more funds, the new show had the strongest financial backing enjoyed by La Fura so far. Nevertheless, as argued by Antúnez to Giannetti, the internal processes of the group were marked by a disturbing awareness, emerging from the intimidating 'fear and timidity [...] of doing something different' after the positive response to *Suz/o/Suz* (1998, 32). He affirms that these and other new factors were frightening and made the creative process of *Tier Mon* more problematic. The greater funds, responsibility, fame and expectation that the group had achieved comprised the first factor. Another factor was that both the group's systematic evaluation of the *lenguaje furero* and the *fureros* getting to the average age of 30 implied a loss of 'a certain ingenuousness, [becoming] aware of everything' (1998, 32). Finally, the wish to increase the theatrical components in the interdisciplinary alchemy of the group by seeking a more literary and linear narrative was another problematic factor: this implied a bigger concern with presenting 'a sense of continuity', and 'making the characters deeper' than in *Suz/o/Suz*, which was unfamiliar terrain for the *fureros* (1998, 32-4).

For Alfonso Sastre, La Fura's characters are allegories.³¹ Physical conflicts and sensorial games were privileged instead of psychological debates: organic and chemical

²⁹ These different tours through Latin America included also Els Joglars, Els Comediants, the Teatre Lliure and the Compañía Nacional de Teatro Clásico de España; it aimed to expose the diversity of Spanish theatre and it also indicated a new status for La Fura within the country's cultural politics. See Redacción, 'El Ministerio de Cultura acerca el teatro español a México', *ABC*, 10 March 1987, p. 73, or J.G., 'Embajada cultural', *Epoca*, 4 April 1988, p. 85.

³⁰ *Tier Mon* was co-produced by Madrid's CNNTE, the Zurich Theater Spectacle, the Valladolid International Theatre Festival and La Fura dels Baus, with the assistance of the Department of Culture of the Autonomous Government of Catalonia (Barcelona) and the Spanish Ministry of Culture (Madrid), and the festivals of Bayonne and Sant Brieu. The latter was an art and rock festival.

³¹ Sastre developed texts for *MTM*. However, only sparse lines or single words were used by La Fura. Sastre stressed this imbalance between his dramaturgy and that of the *fureros*: 'as personagens da Fura são alegóricas, como nos autos sacramentais' (La Fura's characters are allegorical, as in the auto sacramentales). In João Macdonald, 'É fundamental promover a insurreiçãõ', *Jornal de Notícias*, Lisbon, 12 June 1995, p. 38.

materials were substituted for characters' subtexts or motivations, altering the body into other expressive and plastic forms within situations of confrontation. Dispensing with naturalist imitation and representation, allegory and presentation permeated La Fura's scenic constructions. Craig Owens cites allegory as another main sign of postmodernist art (1984, 209), quoting Walter Benjamin's statement in his *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1977) that 'at one stroke the profound vision of allegory transforms things and works into stirring writing' (1984, 216). La Fura's allegorical work transgressed verbal frontiers as well as visual styles and art media, engaged in compressing plural meanings and readings.³²

In *Accions* and *Suz/o/Suz*, these allegories were not dissociated from the creation of the visual, sonic and kinetic environment which sought the materialisation of the selected ideas. In *Tier Mon*, however, the interest in a more linear narrativity and character work revealed an aim in taking the group's processes as well as the interdisciplinary exchanges with theatre to further limits. It also unveiled a new internal division within the ensemble. Other members, such as Antúnez, Arús and Wagland aimed at increasing the relationship with performance art and the boundaries between acting and performing. These boundaries will be examined in chapter 6, but some aspects may be introduced here to explore further this discussion about performing and acting which seemed to be taking an increasing presence in La Fura's process towards *Tier Mon*.

For Robert Nickas, 'acting is an important element of performance art, although it sometimes is important only because the artist attempts to minimize its role' (1984, 97). Amongst the manifestations of Performance Art in the 1960s, the proliferation of Happenings was a strong influence in rethinking acting and representation, privileging

³² La Fura did not have any sense of identity with the historical vanguards. Artaud was a frequent reference for critics on the Catalan ensemble. Drawing on interviews with Espuma, Feldman (1998) states that the *fureros* were avid readers of Artaud. Nevertheless, all the other members confirm that they only started reading Artaud after the constant allusions to the Artaudian presence in their works.

performing and presentation. In different published interviews, La Fura has declared the influences of Happenings on the group's ideas of theatricality.³³ Even when Allan Kaprow intended to separate Happening from other performances such as 'play, dance or concert presented to an audience' he had to use theatricality; 'there are two types of performance currently being made by artists: a predominant theatrical one, and a smaller, less recognized non-theatrical one' (1976, 50). For Kaprow, non-theatrical performances could be differentiated for avoiding 'what theatrical performances are' (1976, 50). However, Kaprow's argument seemed outdated by the ever-changing and plural characteristics of theatricality. In addition, the *untitled event* (1952), Kaprow's first Happenings in the late 1950s and the alternative theatre during the 1960s had already complicated easy categorisations of theatricality and non-theatricality, art and theatre performances or acting and performing.

Michael Kirby acknowledged in 1972 that 'everyone now seems to realize that acting does not mean just one thing – the attempt to imitate life in a realistic and detailed fashion' (1984, 110). Kirby used Happenings to investigate a borderline case within which the performers generally were not embedded in attempting to 'be' somebody or something other than themselves, but performing (1984, 98). He pointed out that under the direct influence of Happenings every aspect of theatre in the United States had changed, and several features could be discerned. Firstly, the lost hegemony of scripts within the proliferation of creative collections in found spaces. Secondly, the investigations about the physical relationship of audience and performance and the participation of the spectators. Thirdly, an increasing emphasis on movement and on visual imagery, with a commercialized use of nudity. Finally, 'more non-matrixed performing has been used [...] and acting has grown less complex' (1984, 110-11).

³³ See J. Zapater, 'Hemos creado un género nuevo', *Navarra Hoy*, 1 August 1984, p. 2, Joan Casas, "La Fura dels Baus" (i 3)', *Diari de Barcelona*, 20 December 1988, p. 27 or Horacio Calles, "La Fura dels Baus", *El Correo de Zamora*, 17 May 1998, p. 4 for some examples of this repeatedly declared influence.

Kirby did not aim at privileging one art form over another. Nevertheless, the 'complexity' mentioned by Kirby in the last feature might be understood as an evaluation or even an arbitrary categorisation which the acting/performing methodologies developed throughout the 1970s or within the 1980s could contradict. The 'lack' of acting in the Happenings could not be compared to a Glenda Jackson or a Ian McKellen performance. However, to say that a John Gielgud performance was more complex than a Spalding Gray performance seems highly questionable and the objectives of Kirby lay in general observations rather than erroneous comparisons.

For Kirby, the lack of 'matrices of pretended or represented character, situation, place and time' in Happenings could provide insights into acting and theatre theories; performing being the non-matrixed acting (1984, 99). The Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal de Luxe performances exemplify complex acts of performing in front of an audience. And both of them may complicate the concepts of acting and performing in distinct ways. The English company, however, seems more based on the belief that something or someone was being represented. The French group Royal de Luxe and the *lenguaje furero* are some amongst other 1980s examples which have been performing qualities, characteristics and matrices determined within their productions and distinct from those chosen by the RSC.

The discussion within La Fura, therefore, was about regulating the exchange between these extremes of acting/performing boundaries as well as whether to develop more as performance artists or actors. In his published interview with Giannetti, Antúnez summarises that all these factors which have been listed above meant that

a large part of the group felt blocked, not only because of this, but because of the individual development going on inside each one of us. Two different methods of work were developed. [...] I realised that we didn't have to have the consensus of the entire group, that it was possible to perform *Tier Mon* without such a consensus' (1998, 34).

At a conference in Cuenca, Spain in July 1997, Müller affirmed that all the productions of La Fura always reflected the internal state of the company. It is interesting to mention here that in a published interview one year before *Tier Mon*'s opening, the group stated that the new production arose out of general ideas about catastrophes, wars and processions.³⁴ The challenging characteristics of interdisciplinary processes and the creative freedom before and during the performance were both problematised and legitimised by the collective authorship of the performers: the lack of homogeneity within the group's diverse backgrounds and the new conditions of work were configuring other perspectives for and within the company.

Until *Tier Mon*, the creative processes had followed a similar development to those of the group's first period or pre-history. A different characteristic in this production was a demand for optimisation of La Fura's time to devise and rehearse the new work. The third production was being thought about between the European performances of *Accions* and *Suz/o/Suz*. The previously mentioned positive response to the works of the group, the constantly sold out performances and transit in the media gradually meant better budgets and salaries not only via the ticket sales but by the increasing subsidies from Madrid and Barcelona. Before leaving the group in 1987, Morte's dynamic management rendered a tight schedule of performances, augmented by the increasing – and paid – invitations to festivals all over Europe. All the riskier situations on the crowded stages, the increasing profusion of new equipment, the mobile and static scenarios and the desired experiments with this new technical apparatus made possible by higher funds, demanded more work in shorter amounts of time. Before being able to start devising and rehearsing *Tier Mon* together, the group created '1.140' in 1987, a box where the *fureros* accumulated the ideas and possibilities for the third spectacle.

³⁴ Victor Riesgo, 'La Fura tranquila', *La Ciudad*, Valladolid, 9 May 1988, pp. 37-8, p. 37.

The ideas for the production had been articulated and rehearsed during almost six months, ten hours a day, including three classes a week of the martial art Aikido to build up the ensemble's stamina, focus, body training and energy.³⁵ It was an addition to the repertoire of physical warm-ups and collective games during the rehearsals and before the performances. This pre-performance work could often be in silence and isolated from the other members, after the collective setting in of last details, props and materials, or the bodies' mud painting in the specific case of *Accions*.

Confronting the internal disagreements among the *fureros* and the new conditions, *1.140* was also the title given to the first try-out of *Tier Mon* on 10 May 1988 in Valladolid. On 11 May 1988, *Tier Mon* opened in Valladolid. In an interview with Fondevilla, the group stated that the plot had

There is an ox, the war god who had two sons, who although useless, enjoyed great power because of their privileged origin. They will divide the territory. It happens within a state of war and, then, the first part of the spectacle presents sequences such as army parades, battles, deaths and diaspora. In the second part everybody is born again, the sons and soldiers are fed by the war god and soon are working towards the construction of a new war god (1988, 29).³⁶

Antúnez and Giannetti described *Tier Mon* as

multidisciplinary stage action, carried out on the ground, among the audience, and on fixed and mobile stage modules. The musicians play from the four towers located at the far corners of the venue.

1 The audience enters the space to the sound of a concert of electric robots controlled via MIDI [Musical Instrument Digital Interface].

2 A character dressed in white [Gatell] appears slowly out of the centre of a mechanical flower, the petals of which are wooden boxes which rotate on a coral, a round recipient which contains water.

³⁵ In an unpublished interview with the author on 23 March 1997 in London, ex-collaborator John Wagland recollected that during a group dinner within the rehearsals of *Tier Mon*, Jürgen Müller arrived at the dining room already characterised as his vision of a possible character. Müller had folded back both lower parts of his legs and kept them there with glued tape, walking with crutches. After the initial surprise, and mocking according to Wagland, the members discussed that proposal; the physicality of the first son of the war god, Dwarf, was created. Wagland or Arús – who shared the role of the other son, Useless, in different runs of *Tier Mon* – had the same cut legs. Wagland's recollection is recalled here because it also gives us an idea of the processes of the group, and a creative commitment which could trespass either the tight schedule of the group or the rehearsal space.

³⁶ 'Hay un buey, el dios de la guerra, que pare a dos semidioses, inútiles desde su nacimiento, pero que, debido a sus orígenes, gozan de un gran poder. Ellos se dividirán el territorio. Todo esto pasa ya en un estado de guerra y, por tanto, la primera parte del espectáculo presenta secuencias como desfiles de ejércitos, batallas, muerte y diáspora. En la segunda parte todos vuelven a nacer, les llevan a comer y luego a trabajar en la construcción de un nuevo buey de la guerra.'

3 Presentation of the different characters, either on platforms or emerging from wooden boxes.³⁷

4 A battle on the ground between two fronts, commanded by Useless and Dwarf [Arús (or Wagland) and Müller], using tyres, mechanical devices, fireworks, [the wooden boxes now with wheels, bazookas and canons throwing out] flour.

5 Exodus in shadow of the victims using all props, including water.

6 The death of the survivors, on poles.³⁸

7 'Menjadoura' [manger scene;] a train [driven by the war god] picks up the reborn and [he] feeds them at a trough, as if they were animals.³⁹

8 Two large cranes begin to dance among the audience, raising the two performers up to five meters of [sic] the ground.⁴⁰

9 Death of the leaders of the armies of Useless and Dwarf, in a bloodbath (1998, 82).⁴¹

Tier Mon was performed 146 times between 1988 and 1990 for 105.295 spectators in different European cities.

The three productions 'became a trilogy without anyone having decided on this previously' (Antúnez in Giannetti 1998, 31). Nevertheless, attempting to circumscribe the three productions, they might be seen as a changing, performative analysis of a main subject which becomes a recurrent theme: the passage of man through life. For Marlet

³⁷ They wore black trousers, trainers, suspenders and tight sleeveless shirts. They emerged wielding power saws which they left in the boxes when they moved down to the ground. This costume resembled the similar uniform of skinheads.

³⁸ They are hanged and die there, continuing to have spasms with sand coming down from the heavy and dark overcoats they wear.

³⁹ The white god and the prisoners performed different actions. One prisoner had his cell lid on, a couple fought for bread, another prisoner was stuck under the water in the manger by the war lord and his two-ended stick. The war lord finished a building up rebellion, releasing a pendulum bar in flames which swung dangerously near the prisoners. Their wooden boxes were put back to the horizontal position and slid down through ramps, opening the audience into two halves and disappearing in the darkness.

⁴⁰ The entrance of the cranes was lit by potent back lights blinding the audience. The suspended soldiers landed back down in the pools of water which moved through the whole space.

⁴¹ The two tortured prisoners were released and fed by the war lord. Under his guidance, they headed towards the two towers where his sons are. After the bloodbath, there followed a coda using the rotating structure. Antúnez and Giannetti registered nine creators/performers *fureros* plus the guest creators/performers Sergi Caballero, Sixto Peláez, Michael Summers and John Wagland. Whilst the production was signed by Grego Navarro and the management by Mercè Illa, the lighting designer was Ramón Rey. Pablo J. Loyzaga was the sound designer and Daniel Nicoli and Andreu Polo were the stage technicians. The equally extended list of fixed and mobile props included '4 mobile ramps, 2 climate platforms made of metal, measuring 2 x 2 m at the base and 1,8 high, 6 wooden boxes on wheels, 1 round, mobile and rotating 'pond' recipient, with a diameter of 1,5 m and 1,5 m high, for the water, 1 tractor carriage, 1 "through", a metal structure with different possible shapes, measuring 1,5 x 6 m at the base and 1,8 m high, 4 stage towers for musicians measuring 1,5 x 1,5 m at the base and 4 m high, 2 mobile swinging cranes able to raise a performer to the height of 5 m above floor level, 4 tubular poles measuring 5 m, 4 sound towers with electro-acoustic robots controlled via MIDI and incorporated into the musical score.' The authors indicate 'multi-purpose premises, sports pavilions, outdoor spaces, industrial spaces' with '1.000 m², 150 kw of electric power' as the proper venues for *Tier Mon* (1998, 82). The theoretical defence of this production by the group was published in *La Fura* (1988). For other sources on *Accions*, *Suz/o/Suz* and *Tier Mon*, see Korver (1991), Torre (1992), Saumell (1996, 1998) and Feldman (1998).

de Korver, there is a structural thread in the trilogy that is 'the search for the integration of or the satisfactory relationship between Man and things' (1991, 73).⁴² She points to a repeated attempt to answer the one same question which was another common denominator amongst the three productions: for Korver, the question was where or to what 'can the urban Man still connect his feelings, reason, unreason and irrationality within a culture which is perverted by intellectuality, or better said, the "intellectualism" and emotional coldness?' (1990, 53-4).⁴³

The postmodern acknowledgement of both co-existent paradoxes within the human trajectory and uncertainty appears to be a further prominent structuring stimulus of the trilogy. The conflictive co-existence of urban, ancient and imaginary worlds occurred within an emphasis on a changing here-now experience. Industrial, organic materials and technology, primitive rituals and staged wars transformed the bodies and the spaces. Feelings and senses were privileged over reason and intellect.

Although not predicted, the trilogy may even be said to have presented a chronological continuity. Being the first work of the *lenguaje furero*, *Accions* accentuated a pre-natal atmosphere through different scenes. This was implicit either in the appearance of the crawling mud men emerging from hidden holes in the floor or in the eggs being expelled from their mouths. The performers in foetal positions within the dripping plastic cocoons or wombs of the penultimate, aerial action also enhanced this association with birth or delivery. *Suz/o/Suz*'s ritual converted two teenagers into new adults. These men go to war in *Tier Mon*, to die, be reborn and re-initiate adult power disputes.

⁴² 'El hilo que atraviesa la trilogía [...] es la búsqueda por la integración de, o la relación satisfactoria entre el hombre y las cosas.'

⁴³ '¿Con qué puede conectar el hombre urbano ya su sentimiento, razón, desazón y irracionalidad, dentro de una cultura que está pervertida por la intelectualidad, o mejor dicho el "intelectualismo" y la frialdad emocional?'

Other co-relations might be suggested within the multiple interpretations and meanings which each production desired and each spectator created. In his 1984 review of *Accions*, Xavier Fàbregas suggested that the elements for posterior analysis which the production provided were abundant.⁴⁴ Bim Mason read the production as a sequence of symbols which drew attention to subjects like Third World hunger and oppression, besides the 'urban frustration and the anger at everything that is represented by the motor car' (1992, 122).

Perez d'Olager states that in *Suz/o/Suz* there were conspicuous references to the post-industrial culture and the current maddening of urban societies.⁴⁵ Within the equally multiple readings of *Suz/o/Suz*, for Carr, 'the performance was as much about the voyeuristic compulsion to witness every excess as it was about spectacles of male camaraderie and industrial primitivism' (1986, 79).

Pere Salabert wondered whether it was inexact to say that *Suz/o/Suz* was the terrifying '*porque sí*' ("just because") of life within its own collapsing (1988, 11). Life, continues Salabert, should be acknowledged as a renewed dowry instead of this crumbling life which might perhaps be summarised, as the production did, by being born, wandering and destroying as a form of production (1988, 11). He juxtaposes the logocentric world and 'cemeteries of discourses' created by words to the non-verbal, ritualistic world of *La Fura* within which the action is its own world; for Salabert, both *Accions* and *Suz/o/Suz* were the manifestation of Man in the world, in his actual and pure giving, within a rite which staged this same Man (1988, 9-10).

Diverse readings also underlined *Tier Mon* but they did/do not exhaust the conceptual significance, symbolic implications and cognitive associations which permeated each scene of each performance for each spectator. The trilogy provided the

⁴⁴ See Xavier Fàbregas, 'El mundo de "La Fura dels Baus" o la apoteosis de la destrucción', *La Vanguardia*, 5 May 1984, p. 47.

⁴⁵ Gonzalo Pérez d'Olager, 'La reflexión de La Fura', *El Periódico*, 8 December 1988, p. 60.

audience with vast grounds both during and after the performances to exercise her/his imaginative skills and create her/his meanings.

These productions composed and were composed by the same aggression toward both the presumed conventionalities of the audience and the medium of theatre itself. They played with the idea of destroying binary, conventional meanings, uniting paradoxes and proposing plural, counter meanings. The *fureros* protested against exclusive, definitive interpretations, offering inclusive platforms to multiple exegetic exercises in their dialogical works.

This refusal or offering may be recollected here through the final scene of *Accions* to illustrate further what may be called dialogical objectives within the *lenguaje furero*. Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of 'dialogism' encompasses works or texts which gather and dialogue with distinct convictions, perspectives, value systems or understandings of the world opposite to 'monologisms', which are structures or texts that emphasise a singular message, set loose from the context within which they were created (1986, 93-4).⁴⁶ The last scene of *Accions* may be a means to highlight that the dialogical work searches for what Marvin Carlson synthesised as 'an open-ended performance, resisting conclusions and seeking to keep interrogation open' (1996, 31).

Accions' last scene presented Antúnez and Gatell wearing vacuum-proof, full body and dark grey-silver overalls with dark glass visors such as those worn by antinuclear contamination squads. They had a powerful fire-hose which they switched on over the performers who had performed the aerial dance (Arús and Tantinyà) and the white man (Müller). With the water pressure over their bodies, the performers kept slipping on the blurred, darkly coloured plastic sheet. Mason describes the actors 'collapsed, hanging off the ropes, limp and Christ-like, until they became a tangled mass of bleached, dead bodies on the ground' (1992, 122). The image of the water flush

⁴⁶ Julia Kristeva uses Bakhtin's dialogism to analyse language, theatre and drama actions and carnival. See Kristeva (1980).

vanishing the colours in this landscape of dead allegories was kept for around 30 seconds before the final black out of *Accions*.

The lights faded back in with a sound which recalled an air decontamination machine. The plastic canvas was there alone, washed and white as at the beginning of the production. Neither the lights nor the applause of the audience brought back the actors. This was a final defamiliarisation of theatrical tradition. The curtain call was substituted by the recorded voice of Morte announcing that 'este ejercicio práctico ha finalizado' (this practical exercise is finished). After some time and no reaction, the voice over was again repeated, and Morte added an imperative 'Váyanse!' (Leave!).

The washed out white sheet provided a visual coda. The same strategy was used in the two other productions. The strategy connected the spectator to a return to the beginning of the production, baffling virtual and real times. The codas seemed to emphasise an idea of a Nietzschean return to origins. The empty, blank page remained there to be filled by the spectators' mental reconstructions, distinct insights, or evaluation of the experience which they had lived. The simultaneous living and making of the three productions might also confuse the interpretative skills and the usually contemplative reading of the artistic symbols by the audience during a performance. The juxtaposition of distinct semiotic systems and art forms provided diverse interpretations for each production. As with an enlarged version of Kasimir Malevitch's *White Square*, one of his 1910s monochromatic paintings, the final bare sheet of *Accions* was a significant, visually literal metaphor of the death of the author and the birth of the spectator.

Roland Barthes' *The Death of the Author* (1968) may be correlated to both the *lenguaje furero*'s dialogism or the metaphor which seems implicit in the final and remaining white sheet of *Accions*. Barthes states that

a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the

author. The reader is the space which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination (1977, 148).

Departing from an open concept of the literary text, this consciousness theorised by Barthes marked a shift in the study of reception and analysis of works in different arts. Kate Lincker sees this alteration as 'hardly unprecedented: it was in the thirties, after all, that Brecht insisted on the work's incompleteness without the viewer's active participation, and on the determining role of social conditions in the process of meaning production' (1984, 391).

Maria Delgado traces this relation even further back. She states that 'conclusions drawn by Roland Barthes and Jacques Derrida regarding the impossibility of fixed referents, and the problems of equating writing and truth' were anticipated by Vsevolod Meyerhold, as well as Antonin Artaud, Brecht and Erwin Piscator (1993, 3). Meyerhold's stylised spectacles were intended to be a dynamic and intimate exchange amongst audience and performers: '[we] intend the audience not merely to observe but to participate in a *corporate* creative act' (in Braun 1981, 60). It does not seem an exaggeration to point out that Happenings, performance artists, Els Comediants and La Fura were/are replies to this creative act desired by Meyerhold and others artists of the first third of the last century. These artistic performances from the second half of the last century concretised a direct and sensorial participation of audience and performers, sharing process and authorship and mixing performance and reception.

These accomplishments might be other indexes of either the cross-fertilisation or the indirect relationship of performance art and La Fura with the historic vanguards. The echo of the historical vanguards' calls for change within the theatrical language of the *fureros* was concretised by the cross-articulation of scenic, plastic and musical axes or scenic threads through the audience. La Fura's theatre is an unwritten theatre, not anchored in words and verbal texts but in plastic, sonic and scenic, dramatic and

performative texts. The employment of the performance text circumscribes this sort of theatre and may help this chapter in considering the three productions of the first trilogy.

5.2. La Fura's Performance Texts

Whilst Richard Schechner (1992) proposed 'performance' as what he considered a new paradigm for theatre studies, 'performance text' has been acknowledged as an open concept in encompassing extra-literary aspects of theatre and the varied *mise-en-scene* of distinct contemporary dramaturgies (Reinelt and Roach 1992; Fischer Lichte 1992). Edward Schiefflin questions the term 'performance text', refusing to acknowledge performance as a text: it might destroy performance's unique properties 'when it is considered as, or reduced to, text' (1998, 198). He recalls the ephemerality and non-repeatable performativity of performance, affirming that 'while texts and performances may be produced out of one another, this is very different from saying they are reducible to one another' (1998, 199).

To argue with Schiefflin's reservations, Erika Fischer-Lichte is one of numerous theatre semiologists who have abandoned the strict guidelines provided by literature and linguistics to analyse the 'structured complex of signs' operating within a theatrical performance. She summarises that 'in epistemological terms, the performance can thus be defined as a text and, since the signs it uses have been found to be theatrical signs, it can be defined as a theatrical text' (1992, 173).⁴⁷ Roland Barthes may again add other premises in considering contemporaneous performance texts. Barthes recollects that 'etymologically, the text is a tissue, a woven fabric' and that 'the metaphor of the Text is that of the *network*' (1977, 158). He acknowledges the text as 'an *irreducible* (and not merely an acceptable) plural' (1977, 158-9). Barthes also supposes that 'we know now

⁴⁷ On performance as theatrical text, see Fischer-Lichte's chapter 7 (1992).

that a text is not a line of words releasing a single “theological” meaning (the “message” of the Author-God) but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash’ (1977, 147). In addition to this, Barthes points out that ‘the Text is that space where no language has a hold over any other, where languages circulate (keeping the circular sense of the term)’ (1977, 164).

The concept of ‘theatrical text’ has also been re-charted. Eric MacDonald pointed out that ‘a text is the primary structure of the psyche and, as a result, serves as the representational account of experience [...and...] textuality as an apparatus that directly participates in the production of meaning and in the formation of structure’ (1993, 1-2). Drawing on this understanding of text, performance text does not aim to reduce performance to text but to indicate other forms of texts, which are theatrical texts. These include artistically interdisciplinary texts or plastic, musical, choreographic texts as those of La Fura’s first trilogy.

These contemporary theatrical texts were composed by distinct constructive principles which different terms try to define. ‘Network’ and ‘web’, previously mentioned by Barthes, reveal a conspicuous applicability within the information society of the late twentieth century. ‘Score’, ‘collage’, ‘montage’, and ‘grid’ have been proposed to cover blanks in following the mutating art and language of theatre. They are also instruments to consider interdisciplinary dramaturgies, theatrical texts or sensorial narratives such as those of the *lenguaje furero*.

Max Reinhardt used the term ‘score’ to define his intentions and his scenic compositions in the 1910s and 1920s. José A. Sánchez points out that ‘montage’, as a constructive principle in theatre dramaturgy, was perhaps the most important lesson that theatre had learned from cinema (1999, 31). ‘Collage’ has been used in theatre criticism and practice for its specific feature of clashing and weaving supposedly incompatible images and worlds (Maguire 1983; Cohen 1989). Robert Wilson saw his *Life and Work*

of Sigmund Freud (1969) 'as a collage of different realities occurring simultaneously like being aware of several visual factors and how they combine into a picture before your eyes at any given moment' (1995, 60). Thence, 'assemblage' as the three-dimensional form of collage might befit the performative dramaturgies such as those of Joan Brossa, John Cage and other artists' *untitled event* (1952). It is also applicable to Wilson's work and La Fura's first trilogy.

Valentina Valentini uses '*ergon*' (energy in action) and quotes Eugenio Barba's '*trama*' (weft; plot) to expose a new understanding of, respectively 'drama' and 'text' within contemporary dramaturgy (1991, 26). She suggests that both text and dramaturgy in 1980s' theatre refer to grids, nets or wefts of scenic actions and themes produced by actors, objects, lights, sounds, images which are moved by and move forward the '*ergon*' (1991, 26). Thence, fixed theatrical conventions, naturalist and psychological linearity or Aristotelian units are discarded within these contemporary webs.

Both theatre critic/artist Mathew Macguire (1983) and art critic Rosalind Krauss (1984) employed 'grid' to describe aesthetic structures developed respectively in theatre and art in the early 1980s. Dealing with artists who leave behind conventional confinements defined by the supposed disciplinary limitations of a medium, and search for their own discoveries, grid is a conceptual intersection which feeds the analysis of both theatre and art. Within this study on artistic interdisciplinarity, these intersections cannot be ignored. Grid encompasses what Krauss sees as a hostility to narrative, a lack of hierarchy, centre and inflection, a refusal of speech, and an emphasis on what Krauss calls an anti-referential character (1984, 18). The similarity of these characteristics is conspicuous to the features of the *lenguaje furero* and its creations during the 1980s. Krauss enlarges this similarity when she indicates that for different artists

the grid-scored surface is the image of an absolute beginning. Perhaps it is because of this sense of a beginning, a fresh start, a ground zero, that artist after artist has taken up the grid as the medium within which to work, always taking it up as though he were just discovering it, as though the origin he had found by peeling back layer after layer of representation to come at last to this schematized

reduction, this graph-paper ground, were *his* origin, and his finding it an act of originality. Waves of abstract artists 'discover' the grid; part of its structure one could say is that in its revelatory character it is always a new, a unique discovery (1984, 19).

The applicability of Krauss' analysis to 1980s' theatre and dance artists and groups seems apparent in the performance texts of Terayama, Plan K, Alain Platell and Arne Sirens, Michel Laub, Welfare State, Forced Entertainment, Brith Gof, Royal de Luxe, Philip Gentl, Denise Stoklos, XPTO, Vidas Erradas, and the Wooster Group, amongst others. Also 'discovering' the grid, the *fureros* found a dramaturgical form closer to their theatrical ideas and aspirations.

This study has manifested its intention of utilising scenic threads (space, time, sound, image, body and movement) to present a reading of La Fura's performance texts. These scenic threads have had different denominations throughout the twentieth century. Whilst Loïe Fuller considered light, movement, colour and music and the relations amongst them as the fundamentals of her scenic creations (1913, 70), Mike Pearson calls these threads 'axes of manifestation (space, time, pattern and detail)' which guide the hybrid proposals of Brith Gof (1996b, 94). Whilst Miranda Tuffnel and Chris Cricknay examine body, space, image and sound as the analytical terrain to outline improvisation and performance (1993), Sánchez privileges image as a prominent area to ground the reading of the new dramaturgies which permeate the twentieth century (1994; 1999). These authors and artists attempt to cover the totality of scenic performances trespassing disciplinary, literary, naturalist and linguistic limits. Drawing on these previous efforts, this chapter selects the threads of space, sound, time, image, body and movement to investigate La Fura's performative writing.

The formed axes among these threads may aid in gathering the various sonic-visual-kinetic-proxemic aspects and nexuses of La Fura's unwritten theatre. The simultaneous succession and transformation of these axes were negotiated until a final weaving of this process established an irregular, chaotically ordered web of actions or

grid. Within the principles associated with the grid form, the form or term of a 'texture', also close to Barthes' 'tissue', is privileged by this study for its semantic and visual metaphor of a flexible composition of scenic threads' formation, doubling, rotations and articulations - left to have the final weaving done by the spectators.

The specific processes of manipulation of these threads by artists of distinct disciplines differentiate a plethora of creations. The examination of these threads includes but does not privilege acting, directing or playwriting, favourite subjects of investigation which deface and keep apart the totality of interrelationships that occur during a theatrical performance (literary based or not). Playing with these threads, the first trilogy's textures or performance texts were woven by an interconnected game of contrasts being played with the spectators. In an unpublished paper, Marcel·lí Antúnez calls this game '*organización emotiva*' (emotional organisation): he explains his use of the word 'emotiva' 'in terms of triggering emotions in the audience with a deployment of unusual situations and codes'⁴⁸ (1998, 7):

[*Accions*'] parts are ordered in function of the supposed intensity of activity and risk for the spectator. Thence, after a calm action there is a more intense one, potentially more dangerous and with greater visual impact. The composing structure of *Accions* combines the intense (A) with the calm (B), creating a sequential line of

A1→B2→A3→B4→A5→B6→A7

(The numbers correspond to the distinct actions or parts: 1 musical theme; 2 mud men; 3 destruction of the car; 4 white man; 5 bodies and painting; 6 aerial ropes; 7 pictorial lone) (1998, 7).⁴⁹

Similar compositions have been employed in subsequent *lenguaje furero*

productions. In *Suz/o/Suz*, the tranquil beginning of the pool scene came after the first combat and before the frantic, general baptism of the acolytes and spectators. As another example, *Tier Mon*'s distanced sequence of the deaths on the poles succeeded

⁴⁸ 'En función de crear una emoción al público con un despliegue de situaciones y códigos no habituales.'

⁴⁹ 'Sus partes están ordenadas en función de la intensidad de actividad y peligro que suponen para el espectador, demodo que después de un cuadro tranquilo viene otro de más intenso, potencialmente más peligroso y visualmente impactante. La estructura compositiva de ACCIONS [sic] combina lo intenso (A) con lo tranquilo (B) creando una línea secuencial de: A1→B2→A3→B4→A5→B6→A7 (Los números corresponden a los distintos cuadros o partes: 1 tema musical, 2 hombres de barro, 3 destrucción del coche, 4 hombre blanco, 5 cuerpos con pintura, 6 cuerdas aéreas, 7 lona pictórica).'

the apparently dangerous and close, chaotic battles amongst the audiences. The proxemic and kinetic reconfigurations of space, performers and spectators maintained the contrast in the compositions.

This game of contrasts was not dissociated from the other constitutive axes of the productions or the features of the *lenguaje furero*. In addition to the temporary break in the adrenaline, the risky runs through the found spaces, and the spatial distance from the action, contrasting moments were achieved simultaneously through sonic involvement. In the passage from the fakirs attacking the mud men to the aerial dance of Arús and Tantinyà in *Accions*, the maddening musical composition of 'Bips' turned into the serene 'Cuerdas' (Ropes). Francesc Cerezzo indicates that whilst the two *fureros* performed the slow choreography, 'the immobile audience, now relaxed, observes the *fureros*, the two ropes give the audience a sense of safety' (1986, 85-6).⁵⁰

These were moves or parts of the visual, musical, sensorial, emotional scripts, or scores of La Fura, which the concept of performance text or scenic texture may encompass. Drawing on the imagetic, sonic or proxemic articulations, the emotional organisation of La Fura's malleable grids worked with an interplay of disorientation and relief, both making the audience feel tense and relaxing them.

The interplay of light and darkness was fundamental in sensorially and emotionally reaching the audience. The increasing amounts of reflectors and moving light apparatuses of La Fura appeared to materialise dreams of the Futurists and Artaud.⁵¹ Besides that, the scores of the productions employed the black out – as in more conventional theatre productions – as a theatrical tool to separate or break scenes. This device punctuated the performance texts and accentuated dramatic tension. The black out may also terminate a previous virtual time and initiate another: partly

⁵⁰ 'El públic, immòbil i relaxat, els contemple; la visió de les dues cordes li dona seguretat.'

⁵¹ See Enrico Prampolini (1995), or Artaud's 'First Manifesto of the Theatre of Cruelty', in Artaud (1988).

constituting the rhythm of a performance and at the same time proposing a visual score. The pace of this game with darkness and light could be accelerated to hide and show scenes, spaces and even escape exits. This acceleration could provoke dizziness in the spectators as well as destabilising their sense of time and space.

All these negotiations with the scenic threads will be examined in the subsequent chapters of this thesis. It may here be noticed, however, that these manipulations of the scenic axes were also employed to avoid the predictability of the game of contrasts as well as to keep the performance's tension and rhythm. In *Accions*, after the active blackout during the pyrotechnic 'Kaos' scene, the audience could not be sure if the darkness indicated a breath of relief or further suspense turning into panic. Similarly, the mud men and fakirs scene saw the return of the allegories from distinct, previous scenes (the second and third actions of *Accions*, respectively, the emergence of the mud men from the floor and the destruction of the car); seeing them back together within the fifth action (the fakir's attack against the mud men with paint and organic materials), the spectators could not know whether the next scene was either being ended or interrupted to be further continued at a later stage in the performance.

This return of both fakirs and mud men linked their distinct and previous scenes to the new one. This may also shed light on the constructive principle of the texture or grid. The dramatic grid presents axes going in different directions but these links or knots between scenes maintain the weaving of the texture. These sequential knots in the first trilogy disrupted the apparent non-linearity of the work. It helped to establish a dramatic continuity to be thought out by the spectator. At the end of *Suz/o/Suz*, the movement and scenes of the new princes on the charts repeating the actions of the old ones accomplished the same idea of continuity. Within the dialogism of the second production, both this scene and the following coda with the *Automàtics* could remind the spectator of both the theatrical montage as an unfolded whole and the ritualisation of

a contemporary, tragic repetition. In *Tier Mon*, both the war god and his sons commanded the strategic unfolding of the plot founded on ancient theatrical traditions of a protagonist and antagonists.

Like the trilogy itself, La Fura's dramaturgy was gradually being formed, mirroring the cumulative knowledge of the group. Both *Accions'* fragmented structure and *Suz/o/Suz's* attempt at a more linear proposal intermingled in the third artistically interdisciplinary experiment of *Tier Mon*. La Fura's performance texts also revealed the axial relationships of the first trilogy within the contemporaneous net of connected themes and insights, or a rhysomatic, wider texture.

This performative dramaturgy of La Fura is certainly linked to the group's organisation of the interdisciplinary barter with other arts as well as the active writing of their performances. As in other interdisciplinary projects and processes, the ensemble's heterogeneity had different ideas about the degrees of these artistic exchanges. This lack of a consensus in *Tier Mon* resulted in the co-existence of conflicting methods. Antúnez recalls to Giannetti that he began 'to have problems with the other members' as well as with 'the repetitive element in theatre' and tours which were 'something monotonous [... and] left me no short term possibilities for creating something new' outside or inside the group (1998, 34). The more articulate discourse of Antúnez made him a natural choice for the theoretical defence of the group's production and style, after Morte's exit to direct the Mercat de les Flors in 1987. It provided Antúnez with more visibility than his colleagues in the press and media. This configured a leadership which was at odds with the ensemble's lack of interest in having any such controlling figure, or even 'a Boadella for the group', as recalled by Wagland in an unpublished interview with the author.⁵² In his interview with Giannetti, Antúnez stated that

⁵² London, 21 January 1997. Boadella is the director of Els Joglars.

in October 1989, one of those things happened which I wouldn't wish on anybody: my lifelong friends and fellow actors got together on their own, wrote a letter, signed by everyone, and, without any warning, 'fired' me. They wrote: 'Take a year (or the rest of your life) off.' According to them, I had moved forward in terms of being creative and wasn't leaving them any space, and if I left them, with time they could take on the responsibilities which I then carried. That was how – with considerable bitterness – I ended my ten years with La Fura dels Baus (1998, 34).

The ten years mentioned above by Antúnez comprises the second period of La Fura's trajectory. His exit was also the end of the feature of the *lenguaje furero's* which consisted of the collective devising, directing and stage performing of the group's works. Antúnez's exit was a sort of death of the father which triggered new fathers: throughout the 1990s, the eight founder members (seven, after the exit of Arús in 1994) reorganised themselves in trios or duos directing and devising works in different artistic languages, public events and associations with other artists.⁵³

In their interviews and conversations with the author, the seven founder members see as remote the possibility of taking up again the *lenguaje furero's* feature of collective devising, directing and performing executed by all the remaining founder members. The disappearance of this feature meant a new rupture between periods; this collective creative work characterised the pre-history as well as the second period of the group, which this chapter has been considering. The rupture also signified alterations in La Fura's performance texts, and by extension in the group's artistic interdisciplinarity. Taking into account the period selected by this study, the subsequent chapters of this thesis investigate the performance texts of the first trilogy further within the objectives of this study on artistic interdisciplinarity and La Fura.

⁵³ The eight founder members gradually stopped performing in the *lenguaje furero's* second trilogy's works: in *Noun* (1990-92), all the *fureros* had different functions and performed but only Ollé and Müller had leading roles on the performing ground during the performances. In *MTM* (1994-96), the ensemble also maintained distinct functions within the dramaturgy which was signed by all the seven members but Müller was the only *furero* performing. *Manes* (1996-98) was devised and directed by Tantinnyà and there were no founder members in the cast.

5.3. Afterwords

The *studium* and the cross-disciplinarity of the pre-history had engendered both an artistically interdisciplinary *punctum* and an acidic criticism of contemporaneity within *Accions*, *Suz/o/Suz* and *Tier Mon*. The training of the first period, however, can not be dissociated from the group's learning processes during the evolution of the first trilogy. The same methodological processes of creation were maintained, but the artistic cross-disciplinarity in venues away from the proscenium arch and the actions close to the spectators were taken to further limits. These productions offered a distinct examination of the theatrical language and indicated mutations in the epistemological definitions of this art.

It is a hypothesis of this thesis that both the staged hybridism and the dialogism of *Accions*, *Suz/o/Suz* and *Tier Mon* are simultaneously reminders and composers of an artistic interdisciplinarity within which La Fura manipulated other arts towards the ensemble's desired *rasa* and retheatricalisation. Attempting to elaborate further how this interdisciplinarity was manifested, the subsequent chapters face a problem common to all theatre historians. Any critical reading dismembers the unrepeatable integration of the scenic nexuses and axes of a theatrical performance which lasts only for a specific duration and is materialised in a particular space. The analysis of interdisciplinary works seems to accentuate this dismemberment of the theatrical event. Through the description and analysis of three productions and the second period of La Fura, this chapter has revealed aspects of La Fura's language, performance texts and manipulation of scenic threads. None of these can be dissociated from either the other scenic threads or the multiple arts entwined in the first trilogy.

La Fura's performance text and artistic interdisciplinarity from 1984 to 1989 were both framed by the features of the *lenguaje furero* which configured a fourfold concept of theatre. These four interdependent features were: the *fureros'* collective work of

devising, directing and performing; the spatial option of staging it in alternative spaces to the proscenium arch; the suppression of the fourth wall; the artistic cross-disciplinarity. Therefore, the methodological strategy to consider the manifestation of artistic interdisciplinarity in La Fura's first trilogy will be that each one of the subsequent chapters investigates one feature of the *lenguaje furero*, and one axis formed by the articulations between the scenic threads. For its relevance to this thesis, the feature of artistically cross-disciplinary exchanges of La Fura's performance theatre will be examined in all the following chapters.

CHAPTER 6

LA FURA'S FIRST TRILOGY AND PERFORMANCE ART

Introduction

In his *First Attempt at a Stylized Theatre* (1913), Vsevolod Meyerhold stated that 'theatre is constantly revealing a lack of harmony amongst those engaged in presenting their collective creative work to the public. One never sees an ideal blend of author, director, actor, designer, composer and property-master' (1996, 264). Meyerhold use of 'ideal' may certainly be questioned and is open to subjective interpretations but this blending of roles was an initial feature of the *lenguaje furero* during the first trilogy. During the 1980s, the *fureros* were the authors, directors, designers, musicians, choreographers, performers, ushers and property-masters of their three productions. It is both this collective feature and the relationship with performance art that this chapter investigates.

Examining this feature of the *lenguaje furero* mentioned above, the analysis of the boundaries between performing and acting is crucial. As such, the first section of this chapter examines these boundaries which are composed by the manipulation of the different scenic threads by the distinct performers. The second section selects image and body which are key constituents in both acting and performing. These scenic threads are also components of the interconnections between 1980s theatre and performance art, already considered in chapters 1 and 2. This previous consideration grounds the focus of the third section on the negotiations with performance art in La Fura's three productions in the 1980s.

This chapter moves from the macro analysis of interdisciplinarity and the siting of La Fura and its first trilogy to concentrate on introducing micro-instances of artistic interdisciplinarity. Chapter 6, therefore, introduces how artistic interdisciplinarity was manifested within the first trilogy of the ensemble.

6.1. The Acting and Performing Boundaries

Chapter 5 has introduced Michael Kirby's idea that there has been 'a shift toward the not-acting end of an acting/non-acting scale in the last ten or twelve years theatre in the United States [... at least within] the theatre considered as an art rather than as a craft, business, or entertainment' (1984 [1972], 110). Kirby concluded that Happenings and earlier desires to find techniques applicable to the Theatre of the Absurd contributed 'to the creation of a state of mind that values the concrete as opposed to the pretended or simulated and that does not require plots or stories' (1984, 114). Amongst other interdisciplinary art forms like performance art, music theatre or dance theatre, performance theatre has been reprocessing this state of mind and concrete acting which may be understood as performing.

Analysing Kirby's investigation and late twentieth century performance, Philip Auslander assumes that the difficulty in being categorical about the boundaries of acting and performing remains. Auslander stresses a shift in contemporary theatre in his *From Acting to Performance* (1997), juxtaposing his analysis of Kirby's study with the Wooster Group's acting work. His analysis of the boundaries between acting and performing may help this section in considering this acting/performing work and La Fura.

Auslander points out that the Wooster Group's polysemic production and acting styles juxtapose non-matrixed performance and characterisation, deconstructing conventional acting, in 'a performance "about" acting' (1997, 39-40). He states that the

Wooster Group's simultaneous citation and critique of conventional acting happen in performances that 'are less representations of an exterior reality than of the relationships of the performances to the circumstances of performance' (1997, 40). Auslander draws on Eleanor Fuch's similar idea of postmodern theatre developing representations of the outside world 'through the development of a performance art "about" performance itself' (1983, 2). Her summary is recalled again at this moment of this study as it seems incontestably related to *Accions*. Furthermore, both Fuchs and Auslander seem to describe a production style which encompasses both the Wooster Group and La Fura, amongst other 1980s and 1990s groups and artists.

Performing and presentation are not necessarily dependent on making someone believe in what is being performed as in acting, representation and character work. As articulated by Kirby, 'belief would not change the objective fact that something or someone was being represented' (1982, 109). The presentation of personal elements from the performer in front of an audience is another characteristic which helps to understand the initial distinctions between acting and performing.

An artist using aspects of her/his life and experience is a usual basis for all artistic creation irrespective of whether s/he is working with someone else's text. This performing state of mind may mix everyday performances, individual memories and an artistic recreation of them departing from a personal method which in its turn fuses all these components. In the case of La Fura, it seems worth pointing out that Pep Gatell's father was a mechanic, Jürgen Müller's father had half of his legs blown off in the 2nd World War, and Marcel·lí Antúnez's family has been in the meat industry for more than a century. In their interviews with the author, whilst Gatell denied any direct or indirect liaison of the destruction of the car with his father's profession, Müller acknowledged a desire to experiment with that part of the history of his father. Antúnez assumed a link between his surprise in seeing photos of the Viennese *aktionisms* during his graduation

in Fine Arts and his childhood memories of the dismembering of dead animals. Both facts were acknowledged by him as direct influences in *Suz/o/Suz* or in his creations parallel to or after *La Fura* (Giannetti 1998, 38). When these influences and personal experiences are employed in the creation and subsequent performance they may differentiate further conventional acting and performing. Either performance texts created by their own performers, or character and/or allegory being performed by her/his author, indicate another level beyond the conventional boundaries of acting.

Auslander affirms that the Wooster Group's performers resist the authority of the text and author; this authority should be instead conferred on the actor and disappear behind the performance (1997, 66). Aiming at the same anti-theology, the *fureros* conferred the same authority on themselves, through their collective authorship and individual choice to appear and disappear during the performance. Both groups seem to have different but complementary ideas about this performing/acting work, blending both extremes of performing and acting. In a published interview with Auslander, Wooster Group member Willem Dafoe stated that either within the aesthetic grids of the group or in his conspicuously naturalist works in films,

I'm this particular guy who has to go through these particular paces. It's not so much that I'm putting forward my personality, but because of the various actions I have to do, I'm presenting my personality in how I field those actions. That is the acting in it. I'm a guy given a character, a performing persona, and I'm going through these little structures, and how I field them is how I live in this piece (1997, 39).

Whilst Dafoe has no problems in explaining his approach as an actor's work, the *fureros* seemed uncomfortable in defining their work during their performances as such, although their work is similar to Dafoe's personal 'fielding'. In the interviews conducted with the author, the *fureros* defined these negotiations between acting and performing within the first trilogy. Neither 'making believe' nor representing someone else were the fundamental *punctum*, but rather 'execution of actions or tasks'.

The *fureros* defined themselves as *ejecutores* (executors), rather than actors or performers. This term is what scenically unites the diversity of backgrounds and artistic performativities on stages within La Fura. Both the acting and the devising processes took into account the skills and possibilities of each performer and the individual desire to stretch physical and psychic limits within the frame of each collectively devised production.

Psychoanalytical drive, however, was not an aim. In an unpublished interview with Mercè Saumell, Pere Tantinyà stated that ‘when I “act” I don’t think, I just do it. I have a mechanical control of my environment based on my psychic and physical energy’ (1990, 157).¹ This ‘state of mind’, also employed previously by Kirby, was defined by Antúnez to Saumell as the ‘coming into a situation’ (‘entrar en situació’) which demanded and motivated his personal warm up and performance (1990, 156). In the same unpublished interview with Saumell, Andrés Morte summarised that each *furero* had his own method towards preparing for the specific state of mind necessitated by the tasks to be performed, taking this behaviour to a limit which might depend on each actor’s energy in undertaking each action (1990, 157).²

The creative states of mind of the *fureros* within the first trilogy appeared to use both the complete distance and the intimacy of each performer with his allegory/character. They might expose the individual performing or the execution of actions in an apparent ‘non-acting’ described previously by Kirby. Both the creation and performance of the *fureros*’ scenic tasks might also draw on personal motivations; ghosts, physical skills, memories or ‘inner “characters”’, as articulated by Tantinyà to Saumell (1990, 149). However, not vanishing behind their created characters and

¹ ‘Quan “actuo” no penso, només faig. Tinc un control mecànic del meu entorn basat en la meua energia psíquica i física’.

² ‘Cadascún de nosaltres segueix el seu propi mètode per a introduir-se en un determinat estat d’ànim que li permeti mantenir una conducta donada [...] Repeteixo, no actuem sinó que portem al límit la pròpia conducta a partir de l’energia utilitzada com a única via d’acció.’

rebutting known acting methods, the *fureros* developed in the first trilogy a style closer to performing.

La Fura seemed at the time to refuse to associate themselves with pre-existing texts which had already set up character, situation, place and time. It privileged the expressive physicality of the creator executing his tasks as well as materialising his allegories. Dispensing with words and naturalist conventions, the execution of their own creations characterised a difference from conventional acting as well as a closer affinity to the performing work. Another factor which diminished the distance between either La Fura's acting and performing work or theatre and performance art was the privilege given to image and body work as the main means of expression. The following examination of the image/body axis in the first trilogy may elaborate further these acting/performing boundaries as well as pre-set the examination of the interdisciplinary exchanges of La Fura and performance art.

6.2. Imagetic Embodiment

Achieving a certain pinnacle in the ritual-inspired works of the 1960s, archetypal images and bodily work with clear symbolic and cathartic intensities have permeated the creative processes of artists and groups throughout the twentieth century. Although body and images were mutually constitutive in La Fura's first trilogy, this section begins with an examination of the company's imagetic work.

The image in scenic works has had its predominance increased within and beyond stages of a late twentieth century world where communication, mobility and exchanges were increasingly facilitated by mass media and technology. As articulated by Richard Kostelanetz, 'as life around us becomes more complex, so should the modes by which

we perceive and arrange our experience' (1994, 9). For many theatre artists, this has been understood as privileging the image work as a substitute for logocentric inputs.³

The vision provides visual landscapes which trigger simultaneous successions of images. Maurice Merleau-Ponty recalls that 'vision is already inhabited by a significance which gives it a function in the spectacle of the world and in our existence' (1962, 52). Within and beyond our visual societies saturated with the vertiginous offer of images, artistic images are constructed creations which comprise fields of meanings. Whilst image as compressed information fits the apparent contemporary acceleration of time, image has a creative potential which makes possible the arrangement of visual narratives which trespass linguistic frontiers.

Images frame fields of meanings, symbols and ideas during a performance, providing stimulation for perception and analysis. Image may encompass significance, subject, figure, body, background, thing, object, movement, lights, colours, scales, idea, space and the relationships between them. Susanne K. Langer may aid the understanding of image within the contemporary arts in pointing out that an artistic image differs from actualities because of its power as a construct (not just gathered and set in a new order); it creates 'abstraction, a symbol, the bearer of an idea. [...An image] detaches itself from its actual setting and acquires a different context' (1953, 46).

Artistic languages permit the collage of different images which unite and contrast separate realities. Liberated from the word as main system of communication or expression in theatre, La Fura's first trilogy constructed powerful, archetypal images such as the emerging/delivery of the mud men from the floor in *Accions*. The acolytes in the transparent wombs and later the dirty waters of the pools in *Suz/o/Suz* or the

³ On a theatre and a dramaturgy of images see respectively, Marranca (1984) and Sánchez (1999).

blood baths and combats of both this production and *Tier Mon* were other examples of archetypal images. The soldiers hung on the poles, the deaths of the leaders or the dance of the cranes at the end of *Tier Mon* were other powerful scenes based on sensorial and three-dimensional pictures in motion.

The scenographic apparatuses and other spatial and relational aspects, which subsequent chapters will consider, aided the imagetic work of the first trilogy. However, this work was neither so dependent on the mega-scenarios nor characterised by the mediated or screened images of the second trilogy.⁴ The images of the first trilogy were centred, instead, on the bodies of the *fureros*. The images created by the *fureros* during the show also engaged and motivated the displacements of the spectators, generating new images. Centring itself on the bodies of both spectators and performers, the *lenguaje furero*'s actions articulated both groups into the weaving of the company's theatrical textures. The circulation of performers and spectators within the performing space occurred in an intersectional territory of fine arts, ritual, music, theatre, dance and performance art, always controlled by the bodies of the *fureros*. Whilst chapter 8 will focus on the relational feature of the *lenguaje furero* or this blended circulation of performers and spectators' bodies, this section concentrates on elaborating further the bodily work of the *fureros* itself.

The body has assumed a critical and political prominence in contemporary theory.⁵ For Brian S. Turner, there is a tradition 'from Schopenhauer to Foucault in

⁴ *Noun* (1990-92) had a sort of an Orwellian big eye composed by several videos which began the production's futuristic narrative. *MTM* (1994-96) had three huge screens where images were projected throughout the production. While the former production had a truss scenario which resembled rock concert stages, *MTM* had 150 boxes which were transformed into different scenarios. *Manes* (1996-98) had no projected images but included a three floor structure built up by the performers and props like a two ton bell. After 1996, screened images predominated in *F@ust versió 3.0* (1998-2000), *Ombra* (1998-2000) or *ØBS* (2000) and in La Fura's opera works.

⁵ See S. Turner (1991) to have an overview of developments in the theory of the body in Featherstone, Hepworth and Turner (1991). Arthur W. Frank examines in the same book what S. Turner calls 'a deluge of books on the body' (1991, 18). See also in the same book, Lasch's and Boyne's articles on the body and postmodernism.

which the body has been central to social theorizing as a critique of capitalist rationality, the Christian concept of moral restraint or of exploitative sexual relations within the patriarchal family' (1991, 18). He also signals other factors to this swelling interest in the body: 'the increasing importance of sensibility and hedonism arising out of leisure', 'the outcome of changing relations between the sexes', 'the demographic transition' and AIDS (1991, 19-24).

The body has always had a critical, political, aesthetic and decisive centrality in theatre which 1980s and 1990s performance accentuates in multiple ways. Eduardo Haro Tecglen's review of *Accions* in 1985 was one of many which called attention to the artistic skills of the *fureros* in moving the audience, emphasising also the beauty of the athletes' bodies undertaking the task.⁶ The deliberately ambiguous costumes of the mud men and the white man in *Accions* and the tribes in *Suz/o/Suz* both hid and demonstrated the performers' complete nudity. The visible fitness and an occulted but not invisible genitalia (stressed instead by the jockstraps) activated the erotic aura of the show.⁷

For Saumell, in all the performances of La Fura, the *fureros* bodies 'are exposed to audiences as gestural and phonic vehicles, designed to create fields of energy between themselves and each spectator. In such sensuous theatre, the performers' bodies act as seismographs, registering the different states of tension throughout each production' (1996, 120). This work also promoted a sexual tension present in the first trilogy through the erotic appeal which has characterised much of La Fura's work. Mary Kelly argues that 'clearly the question of the body and the question of sexuality do not necessarily intersect' (1984, 98). Nevertheless, the body is a prominent site of desire

⁶ Eduardo Haro Tecglen, 'Educados forajidos', *El País*, 2 September 1985, p. 6.

⁷ The pornographic magazine *Lui* took various photos, from careful angles, of the *fureros* in *Accions*. The publication of the photos was prohibited by the performers as soon as they became aware of what had happened. See Fernández (1987, 84).

and the instrument for different manifestations of sexuality/ies. The naked body or nudity have functioned as artistic or performative metaphors for the exposure of the artist's inner worlds.⁸

The performers of *Accions* were consistently reviewed as stark naked, although this was not the case. Within the first trilogy, the only naked bodies were the acolytes in the pools of *Suz/o/Suz*. Nevertheless, the physical fitness of the *fureros* was apparent in their minimal costumes in both this production and *Accions*; it was to be covered by the heavy coats and uniforms of *Tier Mon*'s war scenes without hiding the vitality of their skilled, trained bodies. Saumell recollects that 'bodily communication and exhibitionism form an essential part of the neo-rituals of 1980s culture' (1996, 120).

In *Accions*, the body as object of desire, however, was also defamiliarised by the grotesque movements of those grey, mud men's bodies. Both the shouts of 'sida' and the drying mud, seemingly eroding the skins of those grey bodies, accentuated the terminal fragility of the creatures, framed by the interplay of light and darkness. The penultimate scene's pre-natal atmosphere, with the performers in foetal position inside the dripping, plastic cocoon was violently contrasted with the crude, urban violence and destruction inflicted by the dressed characters with their water hose erasing any trace of difference in the last action. In *Suz/o/Suz*, the physical exuberance of the *fureros* and their erotic appeal had a contrast in the awkward blend of monkey-inspired and teenagers-like body language. Both productions' actions juxtaposed and blurred vitality and decadence, terminality and birth, resistance and repression, individuality and

⁸ Nudity was considered as a primary performative action of the embryonic *movida* in 1976. During the years of the democratic transition in Spain, nudity was a celebration of a re-conquest of freedom of expression after the repressive Francoist regime. At a theatre conference in Cuenca, Spain in 1997, Cesar Oliva characterised the consistency of nude acts on and around the Spanish stages within the democratic *apertura* (opening) promoted by Franco's death and the Spanish transition, as the *destape* period. *Destape* may be translated as opening or uncovering. This phenomenon could be reflected, for instance, in the offer of pornographic material in public places (strictly forbidden beforehand) or in the artistic, metaphoric, commercial or sensationalist employment of nudity on stages and in the cinema.

collective, actor and person, same and other, difference and homogenisation. The modern primitive rites of the three productions unfolded a dramatic accentuation of the coexistence of paradoxes within the postmodern condition.

Oskar Schlemmer's *Man and Art Figure* (1925) sees theatre history as 'the history of the transfiguration of the human form [... and] the materials involved in this transformation are form and color, the materials of the painter and sculptor' (1996, 327). Within the first trilogy, the body was also the material of the choreographer and dancer. The bodies were transformed by the choreographed gestures as well as by materials into moving scenarios, live paintings, dancing sculptures or mutating allegories. Sharing questions rather than presenting answers through their pictorial, sculptural, dancing, dialogical bodies, La Fura echoed Merleau-Ponty's understanding that the body 'is to be compared, not to a physical object, but rather to a work of art' (1962, 150). The *fureros*, notwithstanding, in their interdisciplinary productions compared the body to work of arts, incorporating the bodies of the spectators into the production of their choreographies, moving images and visual actions. This work might attract critical and aesthetic connections to different body arts such as *butoh*, dance, circus and performance art.

In her foreword to RoseLee Goldberg's *Performance: Live Art since the '60s* (1998), Laurie Anderson states that

because I've seen much of the work illustrated in this book, the images are especially rich. I can hear the voices of Vito Acconci, Christopher Knowles, picture the breakneck speed of Molissa Fenley, re-experience the grinding gears, sparks, and shopping carts careening around in the dark of a La Fura dels Baus event. But even if you've never seen any of this work, the images speak. The sets, stills and performance shots are vivid snapshots of an art form that resists documentation (1998, 6).

Within the diversity of practices and works of performance art, Anderson mentions three North-American manifestations and La Fura. La Fura's shot in the book is a moment of the rite of initiation, not of the fireworks or shopping carts (1998, 73).

Besides illustrating the imagetic strength of La Fura productions, she recalls also their sensorial appeal.

Anderson conspicuously legitimates a connection between La Fura and performance art. Their common emphasis on the primacy of the act and the pivotal role of the artist's body in promoting sensorial stimulation and constructing imagetic narratives recalls the interconnections between theatre and performance art which this thesis has been highlighting. Cee S. Brown sees the use of theatre's major elements (a performer, an audience and a message to be conveyed by this performer to this audience) as linking points between performance art and theatre (1984, 118). Nickas states that performance art borrows elements from 'such earlier art forms as the Happenings and "environmental" performances, [...] as well as from traditional theatrical forms' (1984, 97). Both critics reinforce the constant and mutual interference or the interdisciplinary negotiations between both performance art and theatre. Nevertheless, besides Jan Fabre's groups, few Western theatre companies have been as much associated with both theatre and performance art as La Fura.⁹

This association happened not only due to or through the disorientation of conventional newspaper critics. The artistic interdisciplinarity of the group ignored disciplinary isolation or restrictive categorisations. Moreover, the artistic interdisciplinary traffic of La Fura with performance art which the following section considers, has been legitimised not only by performance artists who have been fundamental in performance art's criticism and practice such as Anderson, but also by equally fundamental critics such as Rose Lee Goldberg.

⁹ For a brief introduction on Fabre, see Goldberg (1988, 1998).

6.3. La Fura's Artistic Interdisciplinary Exchanges with Performance Art

Extending performance to the 1970s, Goldberg's first edition of her first book on performance art could not include the recently created La Fura. Nevertheless, the second and enlarged edition, re-entitled *Performance Art: from Futurism to the Present* and published in 1988, includes a short overview of the revitalisation of theatre, dance and opera through an innovative performance tradition which included La Fura. She highlights the group amongst the theatre artists mentioned, and presents her reading of the two first works of the trilogy:

in Spain, [...] La Fura dels Baus has blossomed in the recently liberated political setting. Comprising twelve actors, including painters, musicians, professional and inexperienced performers, it has produced works such as *Suz o suz* [sic] (1986) [sic] and *Accions* (1986) [sic] which explore daring and provocative bacchanalian scenes of violence, death and the after-life, reminiscent of great seventeenth-century Spanish paintings in their dramatic landscapes and religious intensity, and with faint traces of Surrealist film images such as those of Buñuel's (1988, 199).

Employing painting and cinema to present La Fura's theatre, Goldberg connects the company to a European 'burgeoning of performance-theatre' (1988, 199). She describes it in 1998 as a 'new performance-art theater [which] had nothing whatsoever to do with even the most basic of theatrical concerns: no script, no text, no narrative, no director, and especially no actors. "No Previous Theater Experience Necessary" read an advertisement for Robert Wilson's *The Life and Times of Sigmund Freud* (1969)' (1998, 64). She also cites works by Mabou Mines, Meredith Monk, Richard Foreman and the Wooster Group during the 1970s.

This 'new performance art-theatre' mentioned by Goldberg in 1998 should not be discredited as postmodern affectation but connected to the interdisciplinary paths opened by both theatre and performance art. Ten years before, Goldberg mentioned Squat Theater, Spalding Gray, Elizabeth LeComte, Jan Fabre, *Nuova Spettacolarita* (Italian groups like La Gaia Scienza and Falso Movimento), Théâtre du Soleil, Akademia Ruchu (Tadeusz Kantor's disciples in Poland) and La Fura as examples of

the fact that ‘the division between traditional theatre and performance became blurred, to the extent that even theatre critics began to cover performance, though until 1979 they had almost totally ignored it, leaving its reviewing to fine arts or avant-garde music critics’ (1988, 195-9).

The few systematised studies on performance art in Catalonia included La Fura alongside Joan Brossa, ZAZ and Albert Vidal as examples of Catalan performance art (Borras 1986; Camps 1988; Picazo 1988). Maria Lluïsa Borras points out a similarity of La Fura with principles of performance art going from Francis Picabia to Jean Tinguely (1986, 53). Amongst the many theatre critics who alluded to the performance art field in their reviews of La Fura, Xavier Fàbregas’ review of *Accions* indicates the use of materials in the works of performance artists such as flour, margarine, ashes and sand.¹⁰ Saumell compares the final painting of the white screen ‘to a visceral, lyrical event reminiscent of Jackson Pollock’s Action Painting, Yves Klein’s *Anthropometries*, Viennese Neoexpressionism and Body Art’ (1996, 119).

These indications seem timid if compared to the large number of analogies which can be found between different performance art modalities and La Fura’s first trilogy. Drawing on the exhibition *Out of Actions: between Performance and the Object 1949-1979* which is also the title of Paul Schimmel’s (1998) illustrated accompanying book, other associations may be suggested. In *Accions*, the destruction of the car, for instance, could recall Allan Kaprow’s *Household* (1964), Raphael Ortiz’s *Piano Destruction Concert* (1966), Cusi Masuda’s performances of destruction (1977-82), Jean Tinguely’s destructive art period (1960-62) or Wolf Vostell’s *dècollages* (late 1960s and 1970s). The mud men might suggest associations with Kazuo Shiraga’s *Challenging mud* performances (1955).

¹⁰ Xavier Fàbregas, ‘El mundo de “La Fura dels Baus”’, *La Vanguardia*, 5 May 1984, p. 47.

The final action painting could remind one of either The Kipper Kids throwing paint on each other wearing jockstraps in *In Performance* (1978) or Stuart Brisley's *Moments of Decision/Indecision's* action painting (1975-98). Other Japanese artists' action paintings like those of Ushio Shinohara (1960-62), Shozo Shimamoto (1956) and Kazuo Shiraga (1956) might also be recollected. The exploding bags of paint in the scene might even echo Nikki de Saint Phalle's similar action exposed in her exhibition in Paris, "*feu à volonté*" (1961).

In *Suz/o/Suz*, one may find diverse links with the Vienna Actionists. The meat being manipulated, chewed and spat out or the blood bath could bring associations with Herman Nitsch's *Aktion Eindhoven's* naked bodies and its torn up open cow (1983). Beyond *butoh*, the bodies covered by either paint or plastic wrapped around with ropes might recall Rudolf Schwarzkogler's *Action* (1965-66) or Otto Muehl's *Materialaktion* (1965), as well as Günter Brus's performances like *Ana* (1964) or *No. 2 Aktion* (1964).

The tangential points between La Fura and performance art works are more than visible. The body equally assumed the role of either a powerful medium or an expressive machine as well as artistic matter, within which different organic and plastic materials were employed. Both the references of performance art in the *lenguaje furero* and similarities between both art forms have a common emphasis on action and presentation. Analysing *Suz/o/Suz*, Borrás avoids pointing out imitation or influence: she rather indicates 'the coincidence of a common will to break away and to find an enormously pure language searched from the origins, from the beginning, of the rejection of things established and rejected by all' (1986, 53).

This common will has been mutating within the contemporary arts in the 1990s. Considering the creation of dancers in the late 1990s, Helena Katz compares the creative processes of these artists to the contemporaneous DJs (disc jockeys) sampling

work (2000, 59). Katz indicates that the cultures of adoption of contemporaneous artists include a sampling of existent materials which contemporary technological networks facilitate within a simultaneous saturation and diversity of tendencies (2000, 60-1).

Any artist works with a baggage of memories and cultures of adoption that he or she reorganises within a performance, either reproducing or raiding ideas of the 'Real'. Roland Barthes acknowledged the text as a clash of writings and quotations, none of them original (1977, 147). Craig Owens reminds us that 'appropriation, site-specificity, impermanence, accumulation, discursivity, hybridization – these diverse strategies characterize much of the art of the present and distinguish it from its modernist predecessors' (1984, 209). The exchanges of La Fura with dance, painting, sculpture, performance art and music are characterised by this interdisciplinary appropriation which crosses the twentieth century.

Within the late twentieth century sampling mentioned by Katz, each group or artist selects, within increasing nets of information and stimulus, new re-combinations, or the strategies that will distinguish her or his work from other postmodernist contemporaries. Drawing on Dwight Conquergood, Marvin Carlson calls 'the trickster the "guru" of this new antidiscipline [performance]' (1996, 189). What distances either the sampling or the tricksters from plagiarism or thefts is also what may characterise artistically interdisciplinary achievements. For Owens, 'the allegorical meaning supplants an antecedent one' (1984, 205). The creative allegorical work confiscates, supplements and transforms the original sources. This procedure achieves an interdisciplinarity when it invents a succession of tricks which compose an object beyond these inspirational sources.

The Internet is one of the technologies which facilitates this sampling and these referential tricks. The fact that there is much pleasure to be derived from the recognition of familiar signs, as in the rhythms and melodies in the DJs mixes, is

another creative motif. Distanced from mere copies, La Fura's appropriations were new barter with other arts to generate works which went beyond conventional ideas around theatre and artistic limits, playing with the recognition of familiar actions and their referential re-use.

La Fura did not mask the references that they sampled from performance art. The anthropometries of Klein might be recalled in *Accions* even by the *fureros*' deliberate use of the colour he created (the *Internationale Klein Bleu*), besides the black, to be thrown on the performers. *Suz/o/Suz*'s 'Automàtics' seem to pay a tribute through their title to Tinguely's kinetic sculptures 'Meta-matic' (1959). Likewise, *Accions* is the same title of some works of Joan Brossa's performative dramaturgy and Viennese *aktionism*. This appropriation or use of performance art references distances itself from mere plagiarism through the critical inventiveness of the *fureros* in giving these referential, plastic actions a theatrical, dramatic frame. As articulated by Andrès Morte in an interview to Salvador Francesch, La Fura welcomed the influence of performance art but disagreed with intellectualised, 'dangerously dull, and excessively contextualized' avant-garde works (1988, 20). Morte also mentions that 'the unintelligible abstractions' should be counter-attacked by privileging visceral and sensorial performances in a direct meeting with the spectator (1988, 20). In the same vein, it has to be recalled that, although refusing the habitual connotations of conventional theatre, the central medium and the objective of La Fura was/is an artistically interdisciplinary theatre. After both World Wars, many artists coming from disciplinary margins connected their art or music to a theatrical performativity or, beyond it, to an interdisciplinary ground. Through the re-reading of performance art's achievements, La Fura reverses the theatricalisation of art and music achieved by performance art into a re-theatricalisation of performance art which also 're-arts' theatre. Theatrical artifice and the embodiment of plastic actions were balanced in the

first trilogy to promote a friction between rehearsed and unrehearsed performers towards an experience of the construction of both theatrical and plastic actions.

The first trilogy reveals a slightly progressive accentuation of theatrical elements over the predominance of plastic and sculptoric concerns. The prominent inputs of performance art in the *lenguaje furero* remained within the company's aesthetic games. Nevertheless, whilst *Accions* disclosed a re-reading of both theatre and contemporaneity through performance art's heritage, in *Tier Mon* there was an increased relationship with theatrical conventions such as a protagonist, antagonists, characters, plot, narrative, acting. This production did not deny the presence of performance art elements, but, even a flirtation with the proscenium arch/stalls relationship might be seen in the *manjedoura* scene and its distanced spectators frontally watching the rehearsed actions.¹¹ In that sense, *Suz/o/Suz* may be considered the most balanced performance art and theatre negotiations within La Fura's first trilogy.

This retheatricalisation of both theatre and performance art in La Fura was achieved by a double, balanced emphasis on the extremes of the acting/performing boundaries, the image/body axis and the theatre/performance art intersections. The destruction of pianos and cars by performance artists in the 1960s did not have the acting work of the *fureros* shouting and enhancing the aggressiveness implicit in the action. The serene models who performed the living paintbrushes of Klein's anthropometries did not enact pain on making contact with the paint nor did they have the grotesque, elaborated movements of the mud men. The suspended actions of Stelarc

¹¹ This *a la Italiana* approach increased conspicuously in the second trilogy after Antúnez's exit, 'officialised' in 1990. *Noun* (1990-92), *MTM* (1994-96) and *Manes* (1996-98) appear to verify this, before similar increase within the company's mega performances like *Simbiosis* (1997) or the opera works in *Atlántida* (1996) and *La Condenación de Fausto* (*The Damnation of Faust*, 1999). *F@ust verió 3.0* (1998-2000) and *Ombra* (1998-2000), *El Martiri de San Sebastià* (*San Sebastian's Martyrdom*, 1997) or *D. Q.* (2000) have seen a conspicuous option for the greater manipulation of theatrical or operistic conventions inside purpose-built theatres, incorporating authors, dialogues, referential acting, characters and the usual stalls/stage relationship.

did not have the choreographic concerns dialoguing with the musical enveloping that the suspended *fureros* dealt with in the three productions. Whilst in Vito Acconci or Chris Burden performances the pain was real, in La Fura, instead, sometimes it was enacted or only enlarged and externally directed to the audience through acting and dancing skills developed through years of practice in the streets and on stages.¹²

Nickas points out that Barthes had spoken of “writing aloud” to question if we might ‘speak, with the concept of the artist’s presence in mind, of “painting aloud” or “sculpting aloud” or “writing aloud” within the framework of performance?’ (1984, xiv). Drawing on Barthes’ coinage and Nickas’ inquiry, it might also be acceptable to acknowledge that, within the framework of theatre, the first trilogy comprises actions which combined the ‘painting and sculpting aloud’ with a ‘writing aloud’. Within La Fura, this resulted in what one could call a ‘playing aloud’ which permeates the first trilogy, combining acting/performing, painting, sculpting, dancing and writing aloud.

6.4. Afterwords

This ‘playing aloud’ may summarise one conceptual façade of artistic interdisciplinarity within La Fura’s theatre which has been accentuated in both contemporary theatre and performance art during the last decades of the twentieth century. Although Paul Schimmel posits 1979 as a final year of performance art (1998, 17), the inception of La Fura in the same year appeared to propose and attest a new – in the sense of other – mutation not only of performance art but of the performance arts.

Previous chapters have disclosed that this mutation was to be summarised as ‘performance’ by several critics, especially in North-American academia. Either seen as live art or performance as well as theatre or performance art, La Fura’s first trilogy was

¹² For an introduction on Stelarc, see Stiles (1998). On Acconci and Burden, see Schimmel (1998) or Goldberg (1988, 1998).

evidence of an artistically interdisciplinary, creative sampling. The distinct elements sampled from disciplines overlapped each other, accentuating the difficulty in categorising the scenic work of the group. While 'performance' is employed to acknowledge the mutating diversity of live arts, it privileges the open theatre such as La Fura's, which has been enlarging its margins throughout the last century within and beyond literary exclusive approaches to this art. In this sense, literary, artistic, kinetic, musical and theatrical presentations assume a common scenic field and a reinvigorating drive within 'performance', for the meeting of artists, critics, students, readers and spectators. These inhabit intersectional spaces, discussing interconnected worlds of doubts, wishes, and discoveries and aims towards new considerations on who we are and where we are heading to.

The image- and body-based productions of the first trilogy may be perceptually related to interdisciplinary relationships with performance art. Reiterating previous conclusions on interdisciplinarity, what characterises artistic interdisciplinarity is the achieved level beyond the scope of the artistic disciplines involved. None of the first trilogy's productions are exhausted by performance art or the disciplinary limits which may be outlined for this, or any other art form. It seems worth recalling that this study needs to be read through the dialogue between its chapters. In the same manner, the interdisciplinary creations of La Fura demand this conversation across a ground of intersections of all the scenic threads, features of the *lenguaje furero* and its relationship with different art forms: the *furero* theatre moves across and within boundaries also occupied by painting, sculpture, performance art, music and dance. Therefore, both following chapters may allow us to consider the exchanges of La Fura with these latter disciplines and the other scenic threads and features of the *lenguaje furero*, before weaving the conclusions of this thesis on this company and artistic interdisciplinarity.

CHAPTER 7

THE SPACE/TIME AXES OF LA FURA

Introduction

Chapter 7 investigates the spatial feature of the *lenguaje furero*. The feature in question is the spatial option of the group in inserting the first trilogy's productions within unconventional venues away from purpose-built theatres. The first section of the chapter describes and analyses the space/time axes of the three productions. The second section connects this axis to the scenic thread of sound to examine La Fura's space/time axis further as well as to investigate the artistic interdisciplinary exchanges of the group with music. Therefore, this chapter elaborates further the artistically interdisciplinary processes and creations of La Fura during the 1980s.

7.1. Other Theatres and the Space/Time Axes

Theatre buildings have distinct connotations for each one of us but it is the place immediately or commonly associated with the practice of seeing or doing theatre. Sharon Feldman poses that La Fura's *Accions* 'began with an empty, undifferentiated space, uninhabited by theatrical ghostings' or 'uncontaminated by theatrical connotations' (1998, 448; 457). Nevertheless, each building or performance space is a particular site of the production of values, meanings and associations, and these sites have their own ghostings which may be crucial in framing the art work.

The chosen space for an artistic performance may be a model of the artist's world which aims at creating another perception of the world itself. The *lenguaje furero*'s specific worlds have been constituted in forsaken or dilapidated locations or abandoned

buildings – warehouses, hangars, factories and polyvalent venues. Exploiting the full space and incorporating the architecture of each venue into the performances, La Fura was assuming and working with the ghosts and connotations, with the ‘left-behind-histories’ of these buildings, as articulated by Andrea Phillips (1996, 70). Phillips names this as a ‘latent performativity’ of the buildings that 1990s installation artists have been using (1996, 70). The ghosts embedded in these different, temporary sites chosen by La Fura might remind us of post-industrial, postmodern worlds and abandoned, destroyed, marginal, impersonal or ruined realities. For Craig Owens, this dialectical relationship between work and site is a postmodern art feature: impermanent and circumstantial, ‘the site-specific work becomes an emblem of transience, the ephemerality of all phenomena; it is the *memento mori* of the twentieth century’ (1984, 207).

Playing with the identification, repulsion or fascination with the meanings of each space, La Fura was proposing other lines and exegetic possibilities for the reading of its created worlds. *Accions*’ world was sited in a building which had been abandoned during its construction; it might imply, amongst multiple possibilities, a lack of future in a world which had not concretised a complete body. *Suz/o/Suz*’s rite of initiation replicated a world that tragically repeats itself; sited in a morgue, the ghost of death and its last rite haunted the spectacle, providing further sensorial and emotional stimulation through the latent performativity of the space. The wars of *Tier Mon* compressed within either modern premises or decayed spaces enhanced the exposed blur of civilised and barbarian values within a post-industrial, postcolonialist, globalised world of paradoxes.

The alteration of the space, structured and even named *Accions*. The process of constructing the performance unfolded its own narrative: the found spaces determined the shape of the production. The primary ideas of Gatell and Ollé happened *in situ*. The version later presented in Barcelona was only finalised within the building in Drassanes.

The morgue in Madrid and its possible sets of specific meanings were a perfect aesthetic framing for *Suz/o/Suz*. Nevertheless, the production was later staged in distinct spaces and sites of meanings.

The site-specificity and the implicit conceptualism of La Fura's performance texts were flexible; the *fureros* seemed more concerned in refusing associations with the latent performativities of the purpose-built theatre. This spatial choice matched the unwillingness of the ensemble to perform either on the streets or in conventional theatre buildings. The found spaces attacked a common association of theatre with 'proper' venues and their connected bourgeois elitism or artistic anachronism with which the *fureros*, like other artists of the *Teatro Independiente*, either did not or could not wish to be associated.

The group performed the whole first trilogy in the Mercat de les Flors in December 1988 and January 1989 for the venue's polyvalent structure makes possible the erasure of usual theatrical associations. The potential of transformation of the Mercat also might highlight the strangeness of the dark, open, wide space, as so desired by La Fura. The group's aimed defamiliarisation of the theatre site might cover seats if the stalls could not be removed, hide spotlights, remove curtains or spread organic materials on the floor. Taking out the theatrical references for the spectators, the *lenguaje furero's* aim was to re-territorialise the theatrical experience. Gerard Imbert states that this re-functionalisation of public and private spaces was a feature of *la movida* which recuperated and rehabilitated urban spaces, doubling not only the social and political changes of Spanish postmodernity, but also providing a spacialisation of an existential search.¹ The aesthetic and existential search of the *fureros* dispensed with recognised conventions of theatre; in developing the work they repeatedly discussed the

¹ Gerard Imbert, 'La Madrid de la "movida"', *El País*, 25 January 1986, pp. 10-11.

kind of theatre they would like to make. The spatial staging within the first trilogy was their attempt at not only a temporary, created and transformable world, but also another type of theatre.

Inside the chosen or found spaces, the levels, niches and hidden places which each found building could offer were used by La Fura to give potency to its narratives. This maintained a permanent demand for improvisation and rearrangements which kept a changing, dynamic *mise-en-scene*. The *fureros* took full advantage of the ample spaces: emerging from the ground, descending from the ceiling, destroying walls for a new entrance, spattering the whole space with water or exploding fireworks within it. Besides the fundamental role of the lights, sound and the suppression of the fourth wall, the creation of fixed or mobile areas altered and composed the changing, living space/time axis in each venue.

None of the fixed areas prohibited the subsequent transformation of signs and functions during the performances. The plastic screen of *Accions* was first a decorative or installation element. Then it became a vertical stage for the final choreography which was played on a huge canvas to the final 'action body painting' of the production, before its barrenness as the metaphor of a blank page to be filled in.

The towers of *Suz/o/Suz* could house either the sorcerers during the combat scene or the subsequent warriors' headquarters. The rite of initiation was also performed there. The triangular laterals of one tower and the rectangular shape of the other tower stressed the idea of two tribes. The towers not only contributed to the imagetic and atemporal mix of epochs and concepts but were also theatre boxes, temporary stages and visible backstages. They contained firm stages, appliances for suspension and flight, props, organic and plastic materials, fans, spotlights, and smoke machine, all smudged together in the 'Mad Max look' of the scaffoldings. The towers of *Tier Mon* were stages for the musicians, acoustic containers for the sonic expansion and acting

areas. Beyond this multi-functionality, the towers in the four corners of the arid, industrial, desolated spaces also embodied scenically the vigilance towers common to concentration camps.

All the fixed areas also postulated a spatial, visual significance of totems or altars. The symmetrical or central disposition inside the spaces of the screen, the water tanks and towers of *Suz/o/Suz*, or the towers of *Tier Mon* and its rotating structure accentuated the inserting and intermingling of ritual content and form in the productions. The mobile scenarios fulfilled similar characteristics of transformation and multiple applicability.

There was the same game of alteration of distinct signifieds and significances. The big trolleys of *Suz/o/Suz* were firstly the parade carts of the warriors. Whilst the prince conductors held hidden reins, the parade carts were turned into combat carts, aided by the changed speed, acting and sound. Then, the carts functioned as the sorcerers' transports heading to the acolytes' water tanks. Having their lids removed, the carts were converted into cradles for the new-born babies. After their rite of initiation, the new princes again used the trolleys as parade carts, re-initiating the beginning of the combat scene.

The moving scenarios worked also as signs of remembrance of past moments of the experience. They unfolded the woven texture or dramaturgy of *La Fura* and reinforced the idea of tragic repetition also implied in the dialogical end of *Suz/o/Suz*. Different creative and technical aspects of theatre had their functions overlapped or emphasised by these mobile sets. The supermarket trolleys of *Suz/o/Suz* embodied much of the information about the distinct personalities of the characters and the proposed world. The mutilated dolls of *Gatell*, the school-police-hospital siren of Müller (who 'wore' his trolley through two holes within which he put his legs and propelled it), and

the television sets of Ollé in those old trolleys were the antiques or garbage of a post-industrial society, and they were also memories of a personal history.

The mobile scenarios might encompass simultaneously scenery, atmosphere and sensory dialogue with the audience. After the birth of the new future warriors, the wheeled, running bath tubs spread quantities of water through the space as well as the idea or atmosphere of a general baptism. Cynthia Carr illustrates this accomplished idea when she comments that 'I pressed this way and that in the crowd, pushing, being pushed, trying to anticipate the next charge, but I was baptized like nearly everybody else.'²

The boxes of *Tier Mon* were petals of the central, rotating structure featured at the beginning of the production. From this moving circle, the war god appears. They were then bunkers from which the two armies emerged. Disconnected from the rotating structure and with their wheels released, the boxes were war weapons, transport for ammunition and wagons for prisoners. Turned upside down to a vertical position and put side by side, the boxes were turned into a roll of cells which resembled a manger through their resulting form and the behaviour of the war lord feeding the prisoners. The central piece of the rotating structure at the beginning of *Tier Mon* was also one of the moving pools within which the soldiers suspended by the cranes were submerged, preparing the new war lords or leaders at the end of the production.

These moving and fixed props, objects, lights and sets simultaneously helped with the choreography of mingled displacements of the audience and performers, and the unfolding of episodes or actions. They were fundamental in changing visual landscapes and sensorial atmospheres as well as in proposing the total experience of living and making the theatrical performance, transforming the physical areas into a continuous

² C. Carr, 'The Audience Saved from Drowning', *Village Voice*, 2 September 1986, p. 79.

performative space. This tense continuity of changes in the productions disorientated the spectator's sense of space and time further.

Tension, space and time are key, interconnected aspects for/of theatrical creation. In a published interview in 2000, Robert Wilson acknowledges these three main aspects of his audio-visual (in the sense of commingling sound and sight) work which he claims to be opposite to the Western and European predominance of written text still persisting as the constructive principle of theatre. Wilson also argues that Europe does not have a visual vocabulary.³ Like Théâtre du Soleil, DV-8, Michel Laub, Allain Platell, Philip Genti or Sémola Teatre, La Fura has been a conspicuous exception to Wilson's assumption: the ensemble's work is centred in the intersection of visual, musical articulations of tension, space and time.

Theatrical time is built up within this negotiation and totality of actions and tensions which gradually reveal themselves. Susanne K. Langer states that 'the phenomena that fill time are *tensions* – physical, emotional, or intellectual. Time exists for us because we undergo tensions and their resolutions' (1953, 112-13). Thus, the time of a performance is articulated through the succession and organisation of these tensions and resolutions. La Fura's timings appeared to bear in mind both this and the speed of communication and expression triggered by the developments in mass media and recent technologies.

The construction of an artistic timing may deny the surrounding, contemporaneous times but this was not the case of La Fura. In an unpublished interview with Mercè Saumell in 1990, Müller stated that the positive responses for La Fura, Els Comediants or Els Joglars' works resulted from a contemporary treatment of 'tempo': he explains that 'nowadays, in seven hours you can be in New York, and in

³ See Ferran Bono, 'En Europa no existe vocabulario visual', *El País*, 18 March 2000, p. 46. For an introduction on Robert Wilson, see Marranca (1984).

one hour I can travel to my country, Germany. To ignore this is the illness of theatre' (1990, 69).⁴ Through abbreviated spatial displacements, Müller acknowledges a changed contemporary time; it might remind us of the feelings of a shrinking, accelerated planet within which the impression that history is speeding up increases (Augé 1995; 1999). Within the media and youth imagery of the 1980s theatres, MTV and video clips added other faster, fragmented proposals to keep the attention span.

Paul Harvey points out that in the last two decades 'we have been experiencing [...] an intense phase of time-space compression that has had a disorienting and disruptive impact upon political-economic practices, the balance of class power, as well as upon cultural and social life' (1994, 284). The contemporaneous practices have to deal and negotiate with this disruptive impact that directly affects the attention span of the audience. In a published conversation with Michael Billington in 1994, Peter Brook adds the influence of television to this disorientation cited by Harvey: Brook sees TV both eroding the tradition of listening and shortening the attention span of theatregoers (in Delgado and Heritage 1996, 51). He argues that whilst in Tokyo (where 'a tradition of listening hasn't yet eroded so much') *The Mahabharata* (1985) had a totally attentive audience, in Los Angeles

we found that a very interesting audience actually had a tiny attention span and that the actors in playing had to fight; every two and a half minute the audience had to be "regrabbed" and it's a way of playing, you just feel as an actor (1996, 51).

Facing this shortening attention span within a fragmented and accelerated supermodernity, the *lenguaje furero* gives this 'regrabbing' mentioned by Brook a similar priority but La Fura's regrabbing is undertaken in an almost literal sense. This priority has elicited different proposals in live arts from the Futurists or Meyerhold to *butoh*, Win Vanderkeybus or La La La Human Steps. These artists have attempted

⁴ 'Avui, amb set hores pots et plantes a Nova York, i amb una m'en vaig al meu país, Alemanya. Ignorar això es la malaltia del teatre.'

sequences of “regrabblings”; throughout a performance they compose timings, within which rhythm is decisive.

Albert Boadella argues in an unpublished interview with Saumell in 1990 that ‘art is, before anything, rhythm. The essence of any art is rhythm’ (1990, 96).⁵ Langer seems to explain this whilst she recalls that ‘the essence of rhythm is the preparation of a new event by the ending of a previous one’; therefore, ‘rhythm is the setting up of new tensions by the resolution of former ones’ (1953, 126-7). Her concept of rhythm appears to be already deeply related to scenic arts in the 1980s and La Fura which practises ‘a relation between tensions rather than as a matter of equal divisions of time [...] Everything that prepares a future creates rhythm; everything that begets or intensifies expectation, including the expectation of sheer continuity, prepares the future’ (1953, 129).

The timing of the *lenguaje furero* was composed by a rhythmic compression and distension of the space/time axis through the actions across and amongst the spectators within each production. The consistent stimulation happened through ever-changing exposures to sensory and sensual spurs within a rhythmic time. This apparently chaotic flux of sensations in La Fura’s impact theatre resulted from a precise work with time.⁶ Playing with the urban, accelerated time of big cities, the different duration of *Accions*’ scenes unfolded the structure of that fragmented text and the temper of our times. Whilst *Tier Mon* presented different stages of a war which could have taken decades,

⁵ ‘Jo crec que l’art és, abans de tot, ritme. L’essència de qualsevol art és ritme.’

⁶ The time duration might be changed during the performances for the improvisational potential of theatre which was accentuated by the improvising audience. However, each scene and musical or sonic composition had a precise number of minutes in which to be unfolded and although it could vary slightly, the time and rhythmic duration kept in control was/has been a priority. The time objective for the three productions were respectively 68, 61 and 62 minutes. Cerezzo (1984, 1986), the program of *Suz/o/Suz* (1985) and La Fura (1988) display ‘chronograms’ (the time duration of each scene and music) of the three productions.

years or the precise minutes that the performance should take (62 minutes divided in two equal halves of 31 minutes), *Suz/o/Suz* unfolded a lifetime in its duration.

The production disclosed two generations growing old. In the first scene children come down to play after school. Undressing from their childhood uniforms to their jockstraps, teenagers go to a concert. Two adults became involved in a combat which will not be resolved by the final blood bath. Two new people are born, incorporated, baptised and initiated. The two new adults go into a combat which might not be resolved.

Different closures occurred throughout this and other productions in distinct temporal amounts. Within the game of contrasts of each production, the rhythmic sum of these times configured a broken but a continuous narrative. The open question left the time and meanings suspended in an unfinished text to be reconstructed and finalised by the spectators. Whilst Moisés Pérez Coterillo points in his critical review of *Suz/o/Suz* that the return of the kinetic sculptures 'brought the spectators back to the urban jungle, to the same place where the journey had begun' (1988, 9),⁷ Carr described that 'still we stood there. We were like the crowd gathered at the scene of the crime, implicated by our own fascination' (1986, 79).

Within their found spaces and 'supermodern rhythm', La Fura refused linear structures, accelerating or slowing down the clock and playing with the construction of virtual times through distinct scenic threads, artistic languages and senses. Merleau-Ponty points out that the senses give us 'access to the world' (1962, 217). A concept or perception of time and space has a direct relationship with one's senses and her/his internal and external spaces within distinct areas. These personal spaces and senses live

⁷ 'Y el martilleo de los autómatas nos devuelve a la selva urbana, en el mismo lugar donde se inició la travesía.'

and react to the stimulation inside the different spaces they enter. Theatrical experience is not an exception.

Contemporary, unwritten or non-verbal text-based theatre companies such as La Fura, De La Guarda or Royal de Luxe merge the sensory and the aesthetic building of their performances. Towards this objective, the prominent use of music within the happening communication of the senses calls our attention to the alterations provoked by sound in both space and time. Music and sound have been pivotal in empowering contemporary dramaturgies, assuming a fundamental role in the spectator's perception of space and therefore, of the performance.

La Fura exemplifies this assumption from its inception as a music theatre group. Their initial multidisciplinary statement of intentions matured into an interdisciplinary theatrical form. Thence, the examination of the nexus between sound and space within the first trilogy may allow this study to investigate further a/the first of the artistically interdisciplinary exchanges of the group existing between theatre and music. This following section also elaborates La Fura's manipulation of the space/time axis further.

7.2. Sound and the Space/Time Axis: La Fura's Music and Theatre Interdisciplinarity

Maurice Merleau-Ponty affirms that musical and visual spaces 'can compete with each other only because they both lay claim to total being. They are united at the very instant in which they clash' (1962, 225). He also points out that music is not contained within a visible or circumscribed space, but 'it besieges, undermines and displaces that space'; music brings 'a new dimension stealing through visible space, and in this it surges forward, just as, in victims of hallucinations, the clear space of things perceived is mysteriously duplicated by a "dark space" in which other presences are possible' (1962, 222).

These dimensions attributed by Merleau-Ponty to music bring into play the suspension and manipulation of ordinary time; they create not only surprising spaces but 'virtual times'. Basil de Selincourt explains that music 'demands the absorption of the whole of our time-consciousness; our own continuity must be lost in that of the sound to which we listen' (in Langer 1953, 110). Drawing on Selincourt, Susanne K. Langer explains that all music generates an order of virtual time which she defines as 'an image of time in a different mode, i.e. appearing to have different terms and relations' (1953, 111). Uniting their open realities on stage whilst keeping their differences, music and theatre remind us of the intertextual potential of interdisciplinarity in both disciplines. This cross-disciplinarity between both arts has achieved an interdisciplinarity which 'music theatre' seems to legitimise.

The term 'music theatre' encompasses an art form with specific and expanding margins which are not encompassed by musicals or operas. Music theatre equally aids the understanding of the exchanges between sound and space within La Fura's processes and results.⁸ The process of music theatre promotes exchanges between the two arts but its interdisciplinary creations attempt a level beyond them. Artistically interdisciplinary music theatre does not aim at theatricalising music or musicalising theatre. This art form is neither a Wagnerian nor a Romantic search for a harmonic synthesis of the arts. Robert Wilson, for instance, unites both arts in his works rather by contrast, tension and dualism between them to create what he describes in a published

⁸ 'German music-theatre' was the theme of the 1995 Performance Forum of London's Institute of Contemporary Arts (ICA). London's Lyric Theatre Hammersmith has been organising seasons of music theatre including artists interested in this intermedia. Within 1997 season, Robert Lepage directed and lit singer Rebecca Blankenship and pianist Paul Suits performing Gustav Mahler's *Kindertotenlieder*. Jürgen Müller devised with Wolfgang Mitterer and directed a music theatre production, *White Foam*, which had its opening in Graz, Austria on 6 October 2000. Having seen a video of the performance, it may be summarised that in a similar way to the works of La Fura's second trilogy and most recent works, the new production also employed elements from the first trilogy: Müller applied the main features of the *lenguaje furero* to the music theatre art form.

interview as ‘a visual world parallel to the auditory one.’⁹ The interdisciplinary barter of both music theatre and La Fura were/are not accomplished with music completing the storytelling or providing a form of acting, nor with theatre illustrating the score. Both arts searched, instead, for ‘a brighter experience, which does not exclude all the other levels of significance, of emotion, of being moved or not being moved’, as articulated by Heiner Goebbels (1996, 53).

Langer recalls that ‘music is “significant form”, and its significance is that of a symbol, a highly articulated sensuous object, which by virtue of its dynamic structure can express the forms of vital experience which language is peculiarly unfit to convey’ (1953, 32). This also seems to outline a prominent reason for the consistent employment of music in theatre. Goebbels for instance, conjoins theatre and music toward ‘more complex ways of storytelling, of narrative, which respect all the different levels of experience and emotion’ of both media (1996, 58). As posited by him, music theatre does not ‘concentrate much on the first level of semantics’, but plays with ‘so many other levels of importance and experience underneath the semantic level that I think music-theatre can be in a way more democratic [...] and also deeper as an experience’ (1996, 53).¹⁰

After composing the musical score for La Fura’s *Mar Mediterrània* which was part of the opening ceremony of the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games, Ryutchi Sakamoto declared in a published interview that music should not offer clear images, tell concrete stories nor indoctrinate. Sakamoto sees music opening doors of fantasy, enveloping the listener and provoking her/his imaginative skills to achieve the beautiful stimulus to travel inside one interior’s self.¹¹ An understanding of this potential in

⁹ ‘Un mundo visual paralelo al auditivo.’ See Ferran Bono, ‘En Europa no existe vocabulario visual’, *El País*, 18 March 2000, p. 46.

¹⁰ Part of the talk chaired by Alan Read is published in Goebbels (1996). A tape of the complete ICA Performance Forum discussion is available from the ICA, London.

¹¹ See Isabel Gutiérrez, ‘Ryutchi Sakamoto’, *ABC*, 12 July 1992, pp. 60-2, p. 61.

theatre has motivated not only Sakamoto's collaboration with La Fura, but all the company's work. However, already in the first trilogy, the *lenguaje furero* experimented with the musical medium not as an accessory but as a sensorial and fluid enveloping of the performing area. Sound was used to create this scenic space with the performers: both music and action inspired each other and the interpretative scores of the performers. In addition to that, the musical drive supported the production to go beyond semantic, logocentric levels towards its own theatrical texture.

Sound set an overture and prologue to each production, initiating a deliberate work with tensions. In *Accions*, before the sung performance of 'Mira', the recorded instructions before the performance, the screams and the noisy explosion of fireworks in different parts of the space might disorient the spectators whilst simultaneously opening the production's score and intertextuality. Whilst *Suz/o/Suz* opened with the startling sonorous banging of the electro-mechanical sculptures 'Automàtics', the MIDI system of *Tier Mon* permeated both the state of pre-war and the combats. The introductory concerts prefaced and constructed what might be seen and heard, touched or felt, at any possible moment. This configured a dramatic rhythm. Therefore, sounds were both altering the space/time axis and unfolding the performance text.

In a published interview, Andrés Morte stated 'the performance could not exist without the music but the music can exist without the performance'.¹² The sold out editions of the LP *SUZ* (1987) might legitimize his statement. This does not gainsay the mutual negotiations of music and theatre to construct and empower the dramatic, rhythmic textures of the three productions. In *Suz/o/Suz*, the African inspiration, the predominance of percussive accompaniment and the guttural songs chanted by Vidi Vidal dialogued with samplers and other electric instruments; this conversation

¹² See Philip Hoare, 'The Vermin Return', *LAM*, 12 August 1986, p. 31.

enhanced further the analogies and conflicts between primitive instincts and post-industrial realities within the production's urban rites.

The technical sophistication of the sound design in *Tier Mon* and its high intensities of volume pressures aided the audio piercing which could materialise the infernal atmosphere of war. The production used the Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) system, which provides a recording of multiple layers of sound.¹³ According to an article of Eric Lipscomb, republished on the Internet, the MIDI system makes possible the communication of two synthesizers in a similar same way that two computers communicate via modems; 'the information exchanged between two MIDI devices is musical in nature. MIDI information tells a synthesizer, in its most basic mode, when to start and stop playing a specific note [through programming and live playing] (2000 [1989], 2). Distinct sounds can be woven together through the digital interface, into what Lipscomb calls a "larger" sound'.

Tier Mon's 'larger sound' or score used the sixteen different channels on which MIDI operates. A published review of the production describes the first three minutes of the production as 'tribal screams and a distorted music which seemed the sound of hell.'¹⁴ Nevertheless, the overture concert was still under the minimum volume pressure.

Recent technology continues to contribute to the musical and scenic creations of the group; technology being a research field of the remaining seven *fureros*. The sound tracking of *F@ust versió 3.0* (1998-2000) and *Faustshadow* (1999) were composed through a collective authorship forged through the Internet. Throughout the 1990s, digital theatre has been investigated by the group and *Work-in-Progress/Macbeth*

¹³ For an introduction about the MIDI see <http://www.harmony-central.com/MIDI/Doc/intro.html>. Lipscomb's article is in <http://nuinfo.nwu.edu/musicschool/links/projects/midi/pages/whatmidi.html>.

¹⁴ 'Berridos tribales y una música distorcionada que parece el sonido del infierno.' Abelardo Muñoz, 'El sonido del infierno', *Hoja del Lunes*, Valencia, 4 July 1988, p. 48.

(1997) scenically materialised some of its principles. La Fura's web page explains the digital theatre's principles which postulate the use of video-conference systems and the world wide web to connect different actors and buffeted images or scenes in distinct spaces and cities within a live and direct theatre production.¹⁵

The work of Miki Espuma editing his compositions for *Dadle Café (Give Him Coffee, 1997)* and *Ombra (1998-2000)* in the CD *Ombra (1999)* included the most sophisticated music hardware. Nevertheless, Espuma pointed out in a published interview in 1992 that within La Fura's processes 'the machine, the music and the actor are one' working towards the scenic creation.¹⁶ Beyond disciplinary constraints, defining themselves as a group of people moving across the theatre circuits and without the dynamic of a music band, the exchanges between both arts aimed at the intensification of the here-now experience of each production. The mediation of music by technology at a sophisticated level was contrasted during the first trilogy by the live playing and histrionic performing of the musicians on either their own stage or on the action ground, reinforcing the sensorial immediacy of the three productions.

Espuma, Padrisa and Antúnez were the authors of all the musical themes of *Accions*. They also signed the programming of the synthesisers. Although the musical expertise of the three main composers might indicate a natural tendency towards decision making, all the other *fureros* contributed to the music as is the case with the other facets of their artistic compositions. The recorded CD of *Accions* has the instrumental accompaniment of the composers plus Gatell, Tantinyà and Arúz. Almost all the members took turns in the *Suz/o/Suz*'s concert.

¹⁵ In a personal conversation with the author in 1998, Gatell complained about the fact that technology is still not effective to make possible the digital theatre proposed by La Fura.

¹⁶ 'La máquina, la música y el actor son uno'. See Juana Vera, 'La Fura dels Baus', *El Mundo*, 9 May 1992, p. 36.

In creating the music the company also departed from discussing insights and themes, presenting material to be cross-examined by the group just as in the process of the scenic actions. The musical material was then improvised, undone, redone, contrasted and selected until a first musical form was defined as the right component of the scene. The processes of creation in the musical and scenic fields, therefore, resembled each other. Both the scenes and sonic compositions triggered mutual changes in each other's forms or versions. Constructing the sensorial space and atmospheres of the spectacle for spectators and performers, music was a stimulus for the actions, choreography and performance of each actor who might demand or propose other ideas. During the performance, the synthesisers and samplers could weave in parts of improvisations recorded during the rehearsal process.

Although a definitive version was chosen, the dynamic structure of the spectacle might allow or demand improvisation or changes by the musicians. This does not mean that the minute score of each scene was forgotten. Sound promoted an active writing of the scene. The dramatically decisive interference of the musicians dialogued with what was happening in the space. The sonic collages incorporated industrial noises, screams, human voice deformed by computers, music played live, MIDI mediation or the sounds of animals with blurred frontiers between music and noise.

Within the sonic compositions of La Fura, words, primal screams, gibberish and onomatopoeias were present in the three productions fulfilling the distinct dramatic objectives of their scores. Sound can bring out played utterances and accentuated the non-visible motion of forms, through music, words and voices. The illocutionary force of the word *mira* (see) was emphasised by the aggressive acting or imperative delivery: the amplification provided by the microphone and the successive sharp blows of Padrisa's saxophone, but what could be seen was the performance of the musicians within the abandoned space. The intercalation of 'mira' and 'sida' (AIDS) brought into

consideration a surrounding, contemporary 'plague' at a time when the incidence of AIDS/HIV was increasing in Spain.¹⁷ The repetition of both words helped the building up of the scenic tension, the music's rhythm as well as the exegetic stimulations for the spectators.

The sonic work in *Accions* included a short poem by Ringelnatz repeated by Müller. This was the only use of a literary (other than onomatopoeic or gibberish) text in the first trilogy. The musical track of the scene was the words of the poem and a Morse code bipping. This contrast with the previous musical compositions brought special attention to the same text but it was one more symbol or source of information amongst others in the dialogical action. In their interviews with the author, the ensemble manifested its interest in exposing prophets, leaders and their promises of salvation within disorientating times. Nevertheless, the dialogism of the scene might also impart an anti-logocentrism.

Both the devaluation of spoken language and the questioning of logocentric values were present in that text being delivered in a language available for few, or even none, of the spectators. Even in Germany or other German speaking sites, spectators might be confused by the absurdist content of Ringelnatz's poetry, successively repeated by Müller.¹⁸ Before this action, the chaotic action of the threatening fireworks exploding amongst the spectators as they dashed around for a possible refuge or exit resembled a real battlefield. Müller's use of the German idiom (and the more than familiar association with nazism) immediately after the chaos seemed to outline a

¹⁷ According to the Centro Nacional de Epidemiología (National Centre of Epidemiology), the first case of Aids in Spain was registered in 1981. The numbers doubled annually until 1993 when they began declining. See <http://www.msc.es/sida/epidemiologia/htm>, and more specifically http://www.msc.es/sida/epidemiologia/situacion_actualizada/tabla3.htm.

¹⁸ The chosen poem of Ringelnatz described a love story between a pair of bottles. It is recorded as track 7, *Hombre Blanco*, of the CD *Accions* (1997).

critique of the Second World War and Western rationality within the dance of other meanings within the scene.

A pyrotechnic cascade of white magnesium light silhouetting a tall man standing still in a higher part of the building was the last effect of the chaos scene. Besides the idiom, Müller's *physique-du-role* (white, blonde, blue eyes) had his 'whiteness' reinforced by a thick, white paste covering his whole body. His initial posture on a higher pedestal resembled a Greek statue. He moved down to the audience, grounded by high platform shoes or *coturnos*. These Greek theatre shoes aimed at raising the actors to a divine level as well as enhancing the performers' visibility. Whilst keeping Müller elevated from the following audience, his shoes again recalled the Hellenistic or Greek basis of Western civilisation.

Other aspects complemented the performative utterance and/or the speech-act of the scene. Rather than enunciating words and meanings in a recognisable, psychologically constructed way concerned with 'making sense', his delivery of the text seemed to be guided by his preoccupation in following a strict, fixed pattern of changing directions. Always keeping straight lines in his moves, he performed an allegorical Cartesian pattern. Müller maintained a martial, military walk. His superior distance above the following crowd seemed to turn them into supporters or disciples. It might also outline a mad victor in his discourse or either a lost soldier or a wandering survivor; the resulting choreography seemed to portray either or both the horrors of war or/and the manipulation of crowds that has characterised different types of fascism.

The scene was finalised by a black out after Müller touched and, in spite of his repeated attempts, could not trespass the white screen. The unresolved *finale* might offer a reminder of the Berlin Wall that divided the German capital after the holocaust. The final image seemed further evidence of both an irrational society and the questionable achievement of a civilised status. The following scene brought back the

difference and contrast with the aerial dance. However, the final scene immediately after this seemed to be another denunciation of the erasure of difference which postmodernism has been attacking.

The high tech fully costumed and impersonal allegories performed by Antúnez and Gatell, empowered by the hurtful water hose, expunged the difference while erasing the different colours, textures, forms and last sounds of the hybrid mud men. The sound of the water flux splashing on the performers and the screen was both the musical and dramatic accompaniment. After the disruptive blackout, the sound of the air-decontamination machine and the again immaculate, white screen brought the spectators to both the end of the production and a return to the 'real' world. Like the other productions, sound and image were altering and composing the space/time axis as well as ending the performance text of *Accions*. The *fureros'* sonic and spatial works have manipulated an artistic *mestizaje* towards their own idea of theatricality and performance texts.

7.3. Afterwords

Accions exemplifies that verbal and written texts might also be used within La Fura's performance theatre texts. Within the first trilogy's intertextualities, the sonic texts might be as inclusive, changing and open as the spatial frames or the collective devising processes. This artistic procedure reflects, distorts and plays with contemporaneous interdisciplinary intensities within the wider social context.

This chapter focused on the artistic performativity of La Fura within the company's found spaces. The following chapter elaborates further this artistic performativity, but its focus will be on the relations between performers and spectators. The subsequent chapter amplifies its ratio in dealing with these relations or the bodies,

movements, images, sounds, spaces and times of both groups. It will connect La Fura's events, spectators and performers to the social wider context of the group.

CHAPTER 8

MOVING THEATRE

Introduction

For André Lepecki, in theatre and dance ‘we sit, the lights go down, we witness – then we leave and forget. The audience has learned to perpetuate a morbid hygiene of the gaze’ (1996, 105). Victor Turner points out that ‘ritual, unlike theatre, does not distinguish between audience and performers. [...] Theatre comes into existence when a separation occurs between audience and performers’ (1982, 112). The *lenguaje furero*’s actions are developed amongst, across, within, above, below and/or with the spectators in the ample spaces without stalls or seats. This fact contradicts the part when Lepecki states that theatre is dependent on the ritual of the spectators sitting down in the dark, and Turner’s assertion that theatre needs a separation between actors and performers.

The first trilogy’s relational feature redesigned the relationship between spectators and performers, audience and performance. The artistic interdisciplinarity of La Fura was deeply anchored in this lack of barriers between spectators and performers, which characterises what I call the *lenguaje furero*’s relational feature. The repercussion of the first trilogy was due in a significant part to this violation of the usual separation between spectators and performers which usually characterises theatre. This theatrical defamiliarisation, however, might also be understood as meaningless violence.

Chapter 8 investigates this relational feature of the *lenguaje furero*. The first section concentrates in describing and analysing it. The second section focuses on the alleged violence of La Fura within the first trilogy as a way of explaining the company’s theatricalised aggressiveness, and the *lenguaje furero* feature further. The third section connects the suppression of the fourth wall in the *lenguaje furero* to La Fura’s home

site, as an example of the possibilities of relating performance and national identity/ies. Movement, and by extension the body, are the scenic threads which permeate this whole chapter. Thence, the fourth section examines the artistically interdisciplinary barter of La Fura's theatre with dance.

8.1. Moving Audiences

La Fura's audience/performers relationship within the first trilogy was chiefly responsible for the productions' proposal of an impact theatre and a dynamic succession of sensations. Maurice Merleau-Ponty understood sensation by the way that someone is affected by a 'state of myself', or the experiencing of 'an undifferentiated "impact", instantaneous, an atom of feeling' (1962, 3). For Loïe Fuller, sensation is the reaction of the human body produced by one impression or idea perceived by the mind; she used her danced movements to provide the birth of this idea in the spectator's mind, awakening her/his imagination to receive and feel an image (1913, 71-2). La Fura privileged the direct, physical meeting between performers and spectators as a catalyst to activate a continuity between body and mind, intellect and senses, experience and perception through sensory stimulation.

This stimulation was built up with the other aspects of theatre utilised in the scene: lightning, scenery (the large and empty space with changing limits), sound tracking, blocking, costumes, and make up. The lights being switched on or off over the participants or distinct areas promoted the continuous reorganisation of visibility and the space. Sonic and musical pressures contributed to this same objective. However, the main impact was composed by the movement of the bodies of the *fureros* and the spectators within a space with changing and ambiguous frontiers, renewing different sensations for both groups.

Drawing on the proxemic (the semiotics of spatial distances) studies of E. T. Hall, Julian Hilton enlists three distinct spatial zones. First, the intimate space which is characterised from 'direct touch and skin contact to a distance of approximately 18 inches from the body.[...] The presence of another person within one's intimate zones implies either considerable trust or aggression' (1987, 22). Whilst the second zone or the social space comprehends 'from 4 to about 12 feet', the third zone or public space 'begins at about 12 feet, ranging outwards to about 25 feet' (1987, 23). The spatial, relational and choreological option of the *lenguaje furero* seems to be encompassed when Hilton acknowledges that the boundaries of the three zones 'may be breached or redefined by special circumstances, or specific convention [...] We may react to this with a feeling of claustrophobic dislike' (1987, 23).

The participation in Pamplona's bull running (*encierros*) or in a Catalan *correfocs* and the exhilarating feelings that young and old people have in these *fiestas* show that spatial boundaries vary from person to person. These *fiestas* also configure a community amongst their participants. Hilton indicates that the physical proximity of theatre spectators in the stalls creates a *communitas*, 'bonded with shared identity and purpose' (1987, 24). The relations within each individual and amongst the other spectators, the actors and this community occur in both environmental and proscenium-arch proposals. The active and desired relation of the spectators with the performance may not be achieved, but in both cases there is a momentary community. This community between actors and spectators comprises a relational aspect of theatre: the *lenguaje furero's* relational feature incorporated this idea of community in a specific manner during the first trilogy.

The community was turned into an unrehearsed chorus without rehearsal in a production which aimed to move and stimulate both the spectators and their senses. The parallel or improvised performances relating to the environment-performance (and its

distinct stimulus and sensations) comprised a show within a show. The sensations, images and movements of the *fureros* were doubled by the imagery, sensations and movements provided by the spectators' reactions/performances: energetic and performative fields were formed. Uniting theatre, dance and postmodernism, Ana Sanchez-Colberg recalls that the contemporaneous distrust of ideologies, institutions and discourses and the devaluation of written and spoken language ground 'the discourse of the body as a battle between self and the world. The world (as in the work of Beckett) is the body, its limits the boundary of reality' (1996, 44). As posed by Barbara Kruger in one of her 1980s photo-collages, 'your body is your battleground'. These statements of Sanchez-Colberg and Kruger took a special reading not only in *Tier Mon's* wars, but in all the activated spaces of the trilogy.

Merleau-Ponty's theory shows that 'bodily space and external space form a practical system' (1962, 102). This body which is the world and the margins of reality met other bodies, worlds and realities within the first trilogy's communities. The perception of bodily space in a shared area has a direct relationship with both one's own body and other bodily spaces. The *lenguaje furero* promoted a physical, sensorial and literal acceleration and constantly renewed the reactivation of this universal meeting of distinct practical, active systems.

Although depending on the bodies of the spectators in an amplified sense, the language was decisively based on the artistic work, gestures, transit and movements of the performers. Merleau-Ponty has pointed out that the body may express total existence at every moment in the sense in which a word may express thought (1962, 166). This possibility happens not because the body 'is an external accompaniment to that existence, but because existence comes into its own in the body' (1962, 166). We are all fruits of the meeting of bodies and their distinct syntheses. 'Synthesis' here is applied drawing on Merleau-Ponty's explanation that

all human 'functions', from sexuality to motility and intelligence are rigorously unified in one synthesis, it is impossible to distinguish in the total being of man a bodily organization to be treated as a contingent fact, and other attributes necessarily entering into his make-up (1962, 170).

When Merleau-Ponty connects sexuality to the synthesis that the body represents, he considers that sexuality is dramatic, '*because we commit our whole personal life to it*' (1962, 171). A similar whole personal engagement with the artistic performance seemed to be proposed by La Fura. The proposal for the engagement and the existence of their productions stimulated and had a dramatic and sensual development, centred on the bodies of both spectators and performers.

La Fura was reprocessing a heritage of proxemic features from the historic vanguards, TI groups, Happenings and, especially, Catalan and Spanish *fiestas*. *Accions*, nevertheless, showed the group confining this direct meeting in closed spaces. Gradually accentuating the physical risk for both performers and spectators with an intense sonic involvement in the unfolding of the productions, La Fura was proposing new tensions to maintain a constant *crescendo* of sensations. This *punctum* of the group in leading with the relational aspect of theatre might give space to plural understandings, including those which misunderstood this aesthetic option of the *fureros* as the exclusive articulation of violence for violence's sake.

Different critical opinions have dispelled this view (Ferrer and Saumell 1988; Salabert 1988; Saumell 1990, 1996, 1998; Feldman 1998, 1999; Sánchez 1999). La Fura does not need a defence of its aesthetic options. This alleged violence is of interest for this study as another means of discussing further implications of the articulation of nexuses between image, space and movement that the *lenguaje furero* was proposing for performers and spectators.

8.2, La Fura's Relational Feature and Violence

The *lenguaje furero* shared with its spectators the immediate experience of a violent contemporaneity, which motivated practical decisions. The audience had to search, was brought into or refused proximity with scenes, images, other bodies, realities, worlds. This proximity triggered decisions that had moral weight within the created community, and the implications of the spectators' reactions in relation to each other and to the actions. The whole trilogy created discontinuities and slippage between the multiple stimulation and the position of the spectators within that shared, performative space. The spectator had more difficulty in controlling her/his exact position within this chaotic ordered system.

This tension is a prominent basis of the *lenguaje furero*. Its exercise was aided by the fact that neither the personal space nor the physical or spatial limits of the production were clearly anchored down. In her anthropological study of ballet, Helena Wulff states that every performance is unpredictable and all those involved frontstage and backstage have 'to handle risks that a performance will not be successful, let alone leave dancers injured' (1999, 111). The individuals in the audience also deal with the risk of the performance's unpredictability and fallibility. The risk of injury which Wulff mentions was also common for performers and spectators within La Fura's first trilogy.

François Pluchart points out that 'the staging of risk, of suffering, and of death cannot be dissociated from the history of Western art. It even constitutes a sort of archetype, inasmuch as any creation tends to be a metaphysics or, at least, a transcendence of the hard reality' (1984, 125). Indicating exceptions since Courbet, Rimbaud, Van Gogh and Artaud, Pluchart states that

generally, risk remains theoretical, a kind of by-product of the masochism inherent in every creative art, and actually one had to wait for the end of the 1960s and the beginning of the 1970s to see the artists endanger their bodies and inflict on themselves a violent physical suffering in order to produce thought (1984, 126).

In the 1990s, Johannes Birringer sees 'violence against the body (epitomized as ritualized-atavistic risk-taking in La Fura dels Baus and as perverted social realism in Johan Kresnik's *tanztheater*)' as a constant presence in European festivals (1996, 44-5). These works are/were achieved by disciplined performers trained in the necessary skills to both undertake dangerous tasks and artistically perform the violence. The *lenguaje furero* differs from Kresnick in including the spectators within the zone of risk, 'sharing' with them the possibility of injury.

Both the relational option of the ensemble with its audiences and this gradual accentuation of the physical risk were responsible for the group's 'violent' image. The company's reprocessing of characteristics of *fiestas* and performance art's provocative features might be seen as based on intimation, domination and physical violence. Cars being destroyed near spectators, power saws and trolleys advancing through the audience, performers eating raw meat and eggs or battles occurring within the audience area are still recollected in accusing them of being a 'violent group'.¹

This persistent remembrance also point to the effective power of La Fura's movement/image axis. However, an enhanced idea of irresponsible and dilettante punks, a group of *enfant terribles* playing around and disrespecting theatre was conspicuously exemplified by the critical reviews to *Accions* and *Suz/o/Suz* in London already in the middle 1980s.² Writing about the scant press coverage that Cesc Gelabert or Lluís Pasqual's works have received in Britain, Maria Delgado indicates 'an insular domestic

¹ Whilst Jane Edwards described La Fura like 'angry, shaved-head Catalans who eat raw eggs, demolish cars and career into the audience with shopping trolleys' (1996, 16), Peter Conrad called La Fura 'a band of theatrical guerrillas from Barcelona who genuinely terrorise their customers'. See Peter Conrad, 'Lithe and Extremely Dangerous', *The Observer Review*, 1 June 1997, p. 9.

² The group was presented in London in 1985 and 1986 as 'crazed, Catalan anarchists'; 'a bunch of lunatics'; 'a deranged mob of Catalan tough nuts'; 'Herman Munster types'; 'junkyard tech inferno', or 'grinning men with shaved heads, a troupe of Spanish anarchists closest to a more violent form of a Sixties happening', respectively, in unsigned, 'La Fura', *The Face*, 76, (August 1986), p. 1, Philip Hoare, 'The Vermin Return', *LAM*, 12 August 1986, p. 31; unsigned, 'When Catalans are Let Out of the Bay', *Hampstead and Highgate Express*, 29 November 1985, p. 7, James Hughes-Onslow, 'Underwater Chaos for Art's Sake', *London Standard*, 11 August 1986, p. 5; John Gill, 'Live', *Time Out*, 796, 21 November 1985, p. 83; Mary Harrow, 'Meeting the Mud Men', *Observer*, 22 November 1985, p. 32.

news-centred English press' and 'the fact that their work cannot be easily read through the clichéd stereotypes through which much of the Spanish culture exported to Britain is marketed' (1999, 83). Although receiving numerous press reviews in London, La Fura did not escape the imposition of stereotypes around Catalan or Spanish culture, and theatre. Nevertheless, reviewing De la Guarda's festive appropriation of the *lenguaje furero* returning to London in 1998 (more than one decade after *Accions* and *Suz/o/Suz*),

Lyn Gardner states that

the success of recent visits to London of South America's De la Guarda and Oraculos have given notice that audiences are more than ready for experiences that take them beyond the boundaries of conventional theatre, that convey multiple meanings open to entirely personal interpretations and that require audience members to supply their own narrative.

The audiences are considered as crucial members of the cast. This can be rather unnerving [...] nobody has given you the script or explained that the plots have a life of their own and are likely to run you down. But it lends an excitement and raw fluidity to the event; which becomes a kind of collective creation full of shared symbols of earth, fire and water, in which actor, audience and author are all one and the same.³

For decades now, audiences in different parts of the world have given notice that these environmental theatre experiences are acceptable. Many of the La Fura's spectators seem to choose the company's productions precisely for the 'excitement and raw fluidity' of the spectacle. And the *fureros*' plots also have a life of their own, incorporating the spectators in this process. De la Guarda has assumed the influence from the *fureros* (Edwards 1996, 16); both companies saliently differ from conventional theatre performances in London's West End, Broadway or Barcelona's mainstream theatres. Different practices should not be analysed through the methods used to approach naturalistic, written texts staged in proscenium-arch theatres. In the same vein, the content of violence or the artistic manipulation of it within a performance text should not be confused with a banal or damaging use of violence against the spectators.

³Lyn Gardner, 'Animal Crackers', *The Guardian*, 8 June 1998, p. 14.

In a dialogue with Jane and Louise Wilson published in the programme for their exhibition of video installations in Autumn 1999 at the Serpentine Gallery in London, Lisa G. Corrin wonders whether thrillers or horror films use violence to help us confront our fears and the desires which haunt us. The artists paraphrased Cindy Sherman to argue that 'by seeing a projection of your fears re-enacted before you, you have the feeling of preparedness.'⁴ La Fura brought both re-enactment and projections of fear to the audience's spatial zones. This might also trigger negative reactions from the audience; Bim Mason comments on the *Accions*' audience shocked by 'the apparent disregard for the sensibilities and safety of the audience' and the unusual challenging of their conceptions of theatre (1992, 122). Nevertheless, already in 1964, Kenneth Coutts-Smith affirmed that

aesthetic experience is now a matter of participation, a three-way dialogic situation actually taking place in space and time between the artist, the spectator, and the object. It is something which *happens*, in which one is actively and psychologically involved rather than something you look at and take on subjectively (1966 [1964], 5).

He also states that the artistic concern and manipulation of violence happens within a world which seems 'to have come to terms with and to accept public violence. [...] We ourselves are also involved and responsible – the injustice against which we protest is within each one of us' (1966, 6). Coutts-Smith quotes Roland Penrose affirming that

the bogey of violence is particularly horrifying and intolerable to us when we meet it in cold blood. The arts, however, avoid its brutal impact by their appeal to the emotions, they warm us to its presence, turning terror into enjoyment and cruelty into compassion. We participate in the act of violence without suffering its evil consequences. Art in fact allows us, as do certain rituals, to satisfy our Olympian yearning to stimulate the forces of nature. Its non-violent power has a therapeutic and catalytic influence (1966 [1964], 6).

Twenty years later, Xavier Fàbregas' review of *Accions* concluded that La Fura called into question the denial of the frenetic violence of the twentieth century, and drew the

⁴ See 'Stereoscopic Vision: A Dialogue between Jane and Louise Wilson and Lisa G. Corrin' in the exhibition programme (1999, unnumbered).

spectator's attention towards facing it. He finishes his article, using the first word of the opening music of the production, reinforcing its performative force within the musical composition or prologue to the dramatic texture of *Accions*: "¡Mirad!" (See it!).⁵

The group's theatricalisation of an increasing contemporary violence should not be discarded from the questioning of conventions and models of relationships within a theatre that La Fura refused. In their programme of *Accions*, the ensemble had already stated that they had 'recycled the theatre of animation to subvert it from its own base. [...] We do not intend to animate but to break the passivity of the spectator through unforeseeable actions, shock, visual spectacularity, live sound, plastic effects, pyrotechnics.'⁶

It has to be recalled that the aggressiveness implicit in the first trilogy was an artistic performance of aggressiveness; a safe and conscious option for La Fura to create movement and sensations. Mason recalls the skill and careful control of the actors in *Accions* 'playing right at the borderline of safety without harming people' (1992, 122). Reviewing the production in 1985, Eduardo Haro Tecglen calls attention to the artistic skills and knowledge of the *fureros* in both performing amongst the spectators and moving them; he also acknowledges the performed violence and chaos, but within measures of art, intelligence and rationalism.⁷ The theatricalised threatening violence which is acknowledged as a skill by Mason and Tecglen, was not based on an

⁵ 'La Fura dels Baus lo único que hace es tirar del paisaje amable que con paciencia hemos pintado sobre la frenética violencia del siglo XX y decimos: "¡Mirad!"' Xavier Fàbregas, 'El mundo de "La Fura dels Baus" o la apoteosis de la destrucción', *La Vanguardia*, 5 May 1984, p. 47.

⁶ 'Hemos reciclado el teatro de animación para subvertirlo desde sus propias bases [...] No pretendemos animar sino romper la pasividad del espectador mediante acciones imprevistas, situaciones de choques, espectacularidad visual, sonido directo, efectos plásticos, pirotécnica, etc.'

⁷ E. Haro Tecglen, 'Educados Foragidos', *El País*, 2 September 1985, p. 32.

'Lo más admirable de estos atletas es la forma de controlar sus propios movimientos duros y aparentemente agresivos en medio de una multitud móvil; y su conocimiento de esa masa y de lo previsible de sus movimientos. [...] Un gran teatro y un gran circo, una gran exhibición de bellos cuerpos masculinos desnudos capaces de fingir la violencia y representar el caos, pero dentro de las medidas del arte, de la inteligencia, del racionalismo.'

inconsequent or belligerent trick but had been developed with children and adults in streets and other public places for four years.

There were tricks involved in chewing and spitting pieces of raw eggs or bloody meat before the spectators. The previous removals of those parts of the car which could make its destruction take hours helped the agility of the performance text. In the same way, the alarming and noisy power saws might scare the spectators but the machines did not have their cutting teeth. Torre states that when the *fureros* destroy a car, they do not use their dangerous tools to attack the spectators: he wonders that 'some spectators could startle themselves pondering what they would do with such dangerous instruments in their hands' (1992, 68).⁸

The proposal of a game was already predicted in the programme of *Accions*, besides the alarming media reviews, or the statement of intentions in the *Manifesto Canalla*. The programme anticipated much of the production. It told of the pyrotechnics, the destruction of a car, hammer blows, a plastic transformation in an unusual area and a succession of situations taken to a dramatic excess. The broadcast instructions, explaining areas forbidden to the audience, demanding respect for the props or warning that the materials employed were harmless and washable, were always repeated before *Accions*. They were repeated before each performance of the trilogy's other productions in a city which had never been visited by the group.⁹ Moreover, the voice off also announced a separated space for those who did not want to share the performing game and area. This space isolated from the actions was another conspicuous counter-argument against the idea of a violent manipulation. It gave freedom to the spectators to choose as individuals whether to take an active part in the performance or not.

⁸ 'Una altra cosa ben diferent és que alguns espectadors s'espantin només de pensar què farien ells amb uns instruments tan contundents com aquests a les mans...'

⁹ *ØBS* (2000) presents similar instructions but projected in big screens within the production's opening.

Spectators and performers were required to have peripheral vision, quick reflexes, physical agility and a spatial awareness that are not often needed in conventional theatre. The danger of collision and injury of both audience and performers is present and characterises some works of Royal de Luxe, La Cubana, De la Guarda, Aurin Teater, Pain Solution and La Fura. However, none of these theatre companies have experienced the writs or protests of injured people which might characterise a violent performance. After seventeen years of this relational feature being practised with around 800.000 live spectators, La Fura had the first and only case of a writ issued against them for involuntarily hurting a spectator in New York in 1996.¹⁰

The only legal case should not be overlooked. Nevertheless, this accusation of damage did not happen during the first trilogy. It appears that the street training and experience of the nine founder members were fundamental in avoiding what the new, auditioned performers may not be able to do. Against the possible injury for the spectators and themselves, the *fureros* have also maintained strict rules in the safe balance of the measures of the space and the permitted number of spectators in order to be able to organise or calculate the risk score of the performances.¹¹ Since the performances of *Tier Mon*, a number of 'moving plants' have been composed of technical staff, moving not only the machines, cars and appliances in each production, but also the audience in case of a possible accident.

In one of the group's first published interviews after *Accions*, the *fureros* pointed out to Francesc Cerezzo that 'we do not attack the spectator; we are conscious of the

¹⁰ Padrisa acknowledges the writ in an interview with Raul Míchinela on 30 November 1996 published in the Internet webzine *Contracultura*. See <http://www.ergos.es/asociacion/contracultura/fura.html>, p. 3 of 4.

¹¹ The spaces have to be between 600 and 1.500 m²: the number of allowed attendance could then vary from 300 to 600 individuals. In 1987, three spectators in Alicante, Spain, were injured because the festival organisers had allowed twice the number of spectators to the number previously agreed with the ensemble. See Pirula Arderius, 'Tres lesionados durante la representación de "Accions"', *Alicante*, 11 September 1986, p. 23. A fourth performance at the 1984 Cordoba Festival was cancelled after an agreement between La Fura and the organisers of the Festival because the number of spectators which wanted to see the last performance was many times bigger than the number allowed by the group. See Rojo (1984, 122).

fact that we are playing theatre' (1984, 52).¹² In fact, the skills demanded by these types of environmental proposals stress an awareness of oneself amongst many other selves who are living the same surprising experience. Many clashes amongst spectators were provoked by the spectators themselves and their lack of experience in dealing with this relational proposal.¹³

The first trilogy was distanced from either the hostile atmosphere cultivated by the Futurists or the gradual developing of these relational aspects by, for instance, the Living Theatre. Sergio Roveri points out that groups like the Living Theatre or Oficina attacked and insulted the audiences who reacted by hating the spectacles. For Roveri, La Fura had 'discovered' an agile form of inverting the equation: its target is not only the audience but their own cast.¹⁴ The risk for the audience, however, was not comparable to the physical risk for the *fureros* climbing buildings, and being suspended in the rites of *Suz/o/Suz* or by the *Tier Mon's* cranes. They also dealt with fire in the three productions or received the ruthless pressure of the water against their unprotected bodies in *Accions*.¹⁵ The 'evil consequences' of ritualisations of violence, previously mentioned by Penrose, were dangerously felt by the *fureros* performing such aggressive actions.

The first trilogy also differs from the frontal addressing or intentional touching of spectators by the performers which might be seen in *Manes* (1996-98) or *ØBS* (2000). Before the mutation of this prominent feature of the *lenguaje furero* in these

¹² 'No agredim l'espectador; som conscients que estem fent teatre'.

¹³ In 1995, Gilda Guedes broke her arm during a performance of *MTM* in São Paulo. In an informal talk with the author in London in 1997, she blamed her own inability in dealing with the production, not the performers.

¹⁴ Sérgio Roveri, 'Sujos, molhados e totalmente fascinados pela Fura dels Baus', *Jornal da Tarde*, São Paulo, 5 October 1991, p. 18.

¹⁵ Hansel Cereza fell 30 metres in a street performance in 1983. See W. La Cruz, 'Francisco Javier Cerezo [sic], volvió a nacer', *Diario de Sabadell*, 4 October 1983, p. 7. Also climbing a building four years later in Monterrey, Mexico, Müller had a problem with his suspension belt; if the help of his colleague had not come in time, he would have fallen 35 metres. During the rehearsals of *Tier Mon* in 1988 one of the cranes fell on Antúnez, striking his temple and breaking his left wrist. In an informal talk with the author, Müller mentions the pain caused by the flushing of the water-hose and his urge to the end of the scene, but also his awareness of the plastic and dramatic strength of the allegory.

productions, not even eye contact was attempted. Reviewing the first displacements of the performers, and spectators, in *Suz/o/Suz*, Cynthia Carr pointed out that the *fureros* 'all came at us without warning. Just barrelled into the crowd. The din of the music drowned out any sound clues. And the performers' eyes did not see us.'¹⁶ The performers' eyes did see the spectators: the reciprocal awareness was/is evidently necessary for the scenic game between the participants. The performers' peripheral vision of space is a crucial skill in both environmental and street performances.

Direct eye contact was refused because it could be understood as an undesired attempt at establishing connections between performers and beholders. There was no invitation to active participation. The scenic space was the area of executing tasks, conscious but independent of the spectators: the group assumed these as part of the performing landscape. Spectators attempting 'to get in the way' were dealt with by the company ignoring them and moving around then to another space within the venue.

Within the general transformation triggered by 1968, power schemes, theatre hierarchies, scenic theology, and the distance and relationship between spectators and performers were questioned. Arthur Sainer states that his and other theatre groups in the 1960s and 1970s questioned the efficaciousness 'in our time [of] the old proscenium jewel box with its sense of performer as donor and spectator as recipient, representing as it distressingly does the manipulatory performer-spectator relationship' (1975, 53-4).

The mastery of a performance is usually based on the involving of an audience by actors, within a manipulation of scenic threads. The spectator is a target. La Fura's manipulatory drive however is not the same as the conventional practices, which Peggy Phelan points out are 'apparently so compatible with (traditional accounts of) "male" desire. [...] Much Western theatre practice evokes desire based upon and stimulated by the inequality between performer and spectator' (1993, 163). Phelan uses Foucault's examples of the Roman Catholic confessional to describe 'the power-knowledge

¹⁶ C.Carr, 'The Audience Saved from Drowning', *Village Voice*, 2 September 1986, p. 79.

fulcrum' which upholds the agency of domination in the confessor: the spectator, the silent confessor who does not speak, dominates and controls the exchange (1993, 163). It may be said that La Fura dominates and controls the exchange, but within a raid on the certainties that both actors and spectators bring to the theatrical event.

Edward L. Schieffelin points out that 'for most middle-class western academics with average experiences of attending theatrical performances, the notion of live performance conjures up an image of actors on stage' (1998, 200). In the programme for *Accions* in 1987, Albert de la Torre suggested that instead of violence there was a violation of the space that the conventional theatre reserves for the 'artist-king-actor'. The *lenguaje furero* complicated the spectators' voyeuristic, safely distant, intellectual reading of the exposed performance, redefining the performer/spectator relationship.

Schieffelin claims a central position for the subject of the relationship between performer and spectator in ethnographic investigation (1998, 204). For the anthropologist, it is within this relationship 'that the fundamental epistemological and ontological relations of any society are likely to be implicated and worked out'; he suggests that this relationship conveys 'fundamental (western) assumptions about the nature of action in ordinary situations' (1998, 204).

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to approach the issue that Phelan and Schiefflin outline to the extent it deserves. However, La Fura's relational proposal is a seventeen year old practical example of a distinct relationship between performers and spectators. If this is ignored, La Fura's work can be reduced to a simplistic, violent relationship of manipulation; the danger of such an approach lies in the way it obscures other ways of reading the work. Therefore, the following section investigates to what extent it may be said that the articulation of the scenic threads executed within the first trilogy, or especially the relational feature of the *lenguaje furero*, appeared to be expressing blurred spaces, identities and concepts of the local, national and international

contemporaneity. However, within the supermodern interplay of universalism and particularism, it is the specific context of Catalonia that interests this study most. For its specific, mutual constitution and transformations of form and content, text and context or work and the wider social context, performance has been acknowledged as a way of aiding the reading and understanding of cultures and societies (Turner 1982; Schechner from 1973 to 1994; Carlson 1996; Fischer-Lichte 1997). Therefore, the relational feature of La Fura may aid my interest in approaching the relationship between the group's styles of playing and its site/sites' modes of being.

The hypothesis that the proposal of merged performers and spectators was a planned aesthetic decision of the *fureros* based on their socio-political analysis of the Catalan reality is not being entertained here. In their interviews with the author, all La Fura's founder members and collaborators have negated this idea. However, a further examination of the *lenguaje furero*'s features juxtaposed to the Catalan site may ground this hypothesis.

8.3. Moving Identities

Like text and context, form and content are inseparable. Krystyna Pomorska in her *Foreword* (1984) to Mikhail Bakhtin's *Rabelais and his World* argues that 'Bakhtin recognizes the duality of every sign in art, where all content is formal and every form exists because of its content. In other words, "form" is active in any structure as a specific aspect of a "message"' (1984, viii). Pomorska illustrates that

in opposition to interpretations of life as inert 'chaos' that is transformed into organized 'form' by art, Bakhtin claims that life itself (traditionally considered 'content') is organised by human acts of behaviour and cognition [...] and is therefore already charged with a system of values at the moment it enters into an artistic structure. Art only transforms this organized 'material' into a *new* system whose distinction is to mark *new* values (1984, viii).

Within their artistic transformations, the first trilogy's scenic situations or their relational and spatial features seemed to replicate the tension, or content, permeating the

relationship between Catalonia and Spain. The fifth scene of *Accions* may prove useful as a means of initiating this investigation. After describing the scene in some detail, this section analyses it within the Catalan/Spanish axis.

The scene in question brought back both fakirs – as the group called the allegories played by Marcel·lí Antúnez and Pep Gatell destroying the car - and mud men (Hansel Cereza and Àlex Ollé) after the black out which ended Jürgen Müller's white man scene. Lights faded in demarcating a central arena which was immediately emptied by the audience. The music, 'Bips', began as a dense and tenebrous repetition. The fakirs ran over the round plastic barrels where the mud men had hidden at the supposed closing of their previous scene. The fakirs forced the mud men to leave their barrels, throwing buckets of blue and black paint on them. The plastic tribulation continued with barley seeds and pasta soup transforming the tainted mud men's bodies.

The plastic and organic materials provoked different gestural, expressive, choreographic and improvisational reactions in both performers and spectators. The audience and the mud men had to run throughout the scene; reacting to the simultaneous displacements around/toward her/him or to find a moment of safety outside the recurrent chaos. 'Bips' had turned into a maddening but controlled *crescendo* mixed with distortions of the human voice, onomatopoeias, growls, roars, complaints and laughter.

The scene transplanted both spectators and mud men to an identical situation: both groups were attacked and had to react to avoid the paint and other materials being thrown at them by the fakirs. However, the mud men who were 'others' in comparison to the audience in their first appearance, suddenly had turned into 'same'. The 'new same' (the mud men), on the other hand, had a distinct body language and skin texture. The 'new other' (the fakirs) had similar clothes, body language and constitution. The normal relation presented in theatre, between we/spectators/stalls/self or same and

they/actors/stage/other or others, was shattered. This shattering disorientated the spectators.

The scene seemed to disorient identity certainties. This identity disorientation does not seem unfamiliar to Catalans. Sarah Radcliff and Sallie Westwood remind us that 'as a modern regime of power, the state utilizes a series of "mechanisms of normalization", that come to rest on the body and through which power relations are produced and channelled' (1996, 13-14). In Catalonia, besides the nation's *normalització* process which began in 1976 after Franco's death, there is also the Spanish normalisation which defends the State's interests and the idea of a national, Spanish identity. Furthermore, the new geopolitical scene in Europe has provoked a crisis in the definition of a Catalan identity within both the globalising tendency and the current demographic configuration of Catalonia. People born in Catalonia may still be seen as a 'second or third generation of immigrants' even if they speak Catalan, which used to be a differentiating index of a Catalan identity: '*charnego*' is a term used for Catalans with a parent from another Spanish region. When these individuals are in the regions of their parents, they are 'the Catalans'. Therefore, they may be foreigners or outsiders both inside and outside Catalonia.

In a critique of the Catalan *normalització* procedures, Josep-Anton Fernández acknowledges that the issue is not exclusively Catalan but Western and postmodern. He points out the limitations of identity when restricted to a unique one, or the national identity; it encompasses a nationalist, colonising and monopolising view over the discursive space of identities (1997, unnumbered). Fernández states that even an enlarged idea of 'concentric identities' (the possibility to be simultaneously Catalan, Spanish and European, which he quotes from the Generalitat councillor Josep M. Pujals), relegates other categories (gender, sexuality, class...) to a secondary status. It

displeases and excludes a considerable number of citizens who do not identify themselves with the *normalització* discourse and consequently distrust it as an intrusion.

Jo Labanyi joins Fernández in pointing to the fact that ‘the current use of culture to manufacture forms of regional identity comes close to replicating its manipulation by early Francoism to fabricate an “essentially different” Spanishness’ (1995, 403). On the same issue Michael Keating quoted the front page of the newspaper *ABC* - known for its anti-Catalanism¹⁷ - on 12 September 1993, accusing ‘Catalonia of pursuing Francoist policies in reverse’ (1996, 143). Fernández suggests that the Catalan *normalització* has turned into a metanarrative which brings distrust, weakening a necessary consensus and risking the ‘delegitimation’ of the same object which it aims to legitimate (1997, unnumbered).

Fernández, Labanyi and Keating are some of the critics who acknowledge a growth in Catalan identity promoted by the democratic transition and *normalització*. However, they also stress that Catalonia’s ‘marked sense of identity, which has grown stronger over the last twenty years [... is] not an exclusive but a dual identity, as a distinct nation within Spain with, at the elite level, a strong commitment to Europe’ (Keating 1996, 160). Keating also suggests that ‘the proportion of those identifying themselves purely [as] Spanish has fallen sharply’ (1996, 130). However, recent studies about language usage and identities realised by the Spanish Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS, Sociological Research Centre) and the Generalitat’s Secretaria General de la Juventut (SGJ, Youth General Office) indicate that both single identities, i.e. either Spanish or Catalan, have decreased.¹⁸

¹⁷ See Fernández (1999).

¹⁸ In October 1998, the CIS realised a study on language usage in bilingual communities. The study *Uso de lenguas en comunidades bilingües* (Use of languages in bilingual communities) interviewed 1,006 citizens in 60 different cities of Catalonia, 615 in the Basque Country and 681 in Galicia. Concerning identities, the results in Catalonia showed that the majority of 35% felt as Spanish as Catalan. 26% of the interviewed felt more Catalan than Spanish, 14.9% felt only Catalan, which was the same percentage of those who felt only Spanish. 47.4% consider Catalonia as a region while 36.9% as a nation. Only 15.7% of the Basques considered Spain as their country, as opposed to 38.5% of the Catalans and 48.4% of Galicians; 35.6% of Basques, 28.1% of Catalans and 12.7% of Galicians considered Spain as a state

A dual identity has to be inserted within the succession of social, economic, political and cultural changes in a postmodernist influenced panorama which has unfolded in the Spanish regions. Labanyi points out that

Spain is no longer different. And yet, as is often said, Spain is now a 'culture of heterogeneity.' [...] Some Spaniards – and foreign tourists – lament this loss of Spain's differentness as if it meant the loss of 'Spanishness' itself. But the postmodernist deconstruction of identity does not mean that one has to abandon all the attempts at definition: rather, it means recognition of the fact that 'Spanishness' is a shifting concept, encompassing plurality and contradiction. [...] The coexistence of the internationalist and the micropolitical [...] typifies contemporary Spain, as in current Catalan and Basque moves towards economic collaboration with their respective French neighbours, setting up supranational regional groupings within the framework of the EU. [...] The Spanish nation-state may have eroded but it is not under threat, precisely because contemporary Spaniards do not have to renounce their 'Spanishness' to be simultaneously cosmopolitan and (say) Aragonese (1995, 397-405).

Labanyi furthers an understanding of the 'uneven results and the "schizophrenic" tendencies within contemporary culture' in the Spanish nations, located by Graham and Sánchez (1995, 407). Both critics explain this schizophrenia as

not mere postmodernist affectation, but an attempt at defining the disorienting effects on Spaniards' consciousness of the speed and complexity of the changes that have radically altered their society over the last thirty years. [...] It displays all the social and cultural fragmentation of the postmodern era. [...] Spain... is a world where the archaic and the modern coexist. [...] Spain's transformation into a modern consumer society over the last thirty years has meant the erosion of traditional forms of social and political solidarity and the predominance of money in a hierarchy of social values (1995 407-14).

formed by many nationalities. The evaluation of the nationalist feeling on a scale from 1 to 10 was the highest in the Basque Country (the majority or 34.3% evaluated it from 7 to 10) and the lowest in Catalonia (32.1% evaluated it from 1 to 4). 67.9% of the Catalans thought that the double identity expressed their feelings of belonging or pertaining, while 58.3% of the Basques and 85.7% of the Galicians thought the same. See J.R.C., 'El 35% de la población se siente tan catalana como española', *El País*, 23 March 1999, p. 1 and 4. See also Luis R. Aizpeolea, 'El nacionalismo vasco está más arraigado que el catalán y el gallego, según el CIS', *El País*, 3 April 1999, p. 15.

The 1999 study of the Generalitat's SGJ interviewed 2.000 Catalans, aged between 15 and 29 years old. The study was divulged in June 1999, showing that a majority of 36% considered themselves as much Catalans as Spanish. It marks a 21% increase in the same percentage of double identity in a study realised by the same institution in 1990. 24.9% considered themselves more identified as Catalan than Spanish in 1999, a percentage that in 1990 was 14.2%. The Spanish only identity was the same in both studies, 15%, while the Catalan only identity was chosen by 37.1% in 1990, decreasing to 16.4% in 1999. See Redacción, 'Uno de cada tres jóvenes catalanes no se identifica con ningún partido político, según un estudio de la Generalitat', *El País*, 1 June 1999, p. 5.

At this point, it may be seen that this section is not a historic digression from either the *lenguaje furero's* features or La Fura's artistic interdisciplinarity. The schizophrenic site indicated by these critics in the mid-1990s seems to have a previous scenic translation in the aesthetic options of La Fura in 1984. The first trilogy reconfigured on its unusual stages this blurring or problematic relationship, questioning a clear differentiation of 'sameness' and 'otherness', as seen in the fifth scene of *Accions* described earlier.

For Fernando Savater, the debates about identity in Spain have to bear in mind that 'any collective identity in our country can not be dissociated from the other Spanish identities and cannot cut itself off from the others without losing part of its own substance' (in Amodia 1997, 105). The environmental proposal of La Fura appeared to be a metaphorical index of the creative processes within which identities are forged or re-invented, instead of ready catalogued, imposed or given attributes ('me performer, you spectator' or 'my land, your land'). The *furero* dramaturgy did not dispense with either Catalan or Spanish, Western or Eastern performative traditions, nor the barter with different arts.

Mariza Veloso and Angélica Madeira indicate the presence in all big cities of diverse sub-cultures which define singular, individual and social identities through aesthetic and political options, style (music, clothes, attitude), vocabulary and social practices which question hegemonic ideas and concepts (1999, 196). La Fura has been one of the artistic and cultural references for diverse theatre artists and young people in the 1980s and the 1990s. The refusal of fixed or institutionalised identities and the search for an expression of their own seemed to have connected the works and the group with other segments of society, both in Barcelona and beyond.

The group assumed in 1986 that its theatrical proposal could have been born outside Catalonia, but not outside Spain.¹⁹ Nevertheless, the *fureros* defined themselves in 1987 as ‘*Bar-ce-lo-nins!* [...] and more than a theatre group’, remarking on Barcelona as a distinct reality within Catalonia.²⁰ In a 1988 published interview with Francesc Burguet i Ardiaca, La Fura already outlined a plural identity beyond the dual identity assumed in late 1990s, whilst defining themselves as simultaneously ‘Catalans, Spaniards, Europeans and Universals’ (1988, 154). Four years later, they described themselves as ‘*fureros*, Catalans and Mediterraneans’ within an ideological diversity which had a common denominator in their ‘desires of acting and living well.’²¹

The group’s definition of themselves as ‘Catalans’ rather than Spanish contradicted doubts about the *Catalanitat* of the group. Within the Catalan *normalització*, the provocative use of Spanish in the *Manifesto Canalla* was not welcomed, but the titles of their productions could employ, play with, mix or ignore both Catalan and Castilian. This questioning of the *Catalanitat* of the ensemble had been interrupted since 1992. The success of *Mar Mediterrània* in the opening ceremony of the Barcelona Olympic Games was effusively celebrated in Catalonia and Spain. Departing from its title, *Mar Mediterrània* seemed to echo also the *Reinaxença* period: the opening scene covered the ground of the Olympic Stadium with performers wearing wide blue cloths which together composed the Mediterranean Sea. The performance was rescuing Catalan cultural iconography, values and history (the Catalan-Aragonese expansion in the Mediterranean area), privileging a sense of *Catalanitat*.

¹⁹ See Inocencio Félix Almarza, ‘Fura dels Baus: “Nuestra propuesta teatral no podría haber nacido fuera de España”’, *Ideal*, Almeria, Spain, 3 May 1986, p. 7.

²⁰ ‘Nosaltres som bar-ce-lo-nins! I Barcelona també és un fet a part de Catalunya. [...] No som un grup de teatre. Som més que això.’ See Núria Escur, ‘La Fura dels Baus, el dejuni del teatre’, *Diari de Barcelona*, 15 March 1987, p. 35.

The Catalan countryside that the first three *fureros* ran away from is another façade of the nation which can not be restricted to one sole concept but many, and in transformation.

²¹ ‘No podemos dejar de ser *fureros*, catalanes y mediterráneos. Hay mucha variedad ideológica y de carácter, pero todos coincidimos en las ganas de actuar y de vivir bien.’ See Núria Navarro, ‘Ni fuimos “terroristas” ni somos empresarios’, *El Periódico*, 17 August 1992, p. 2-3.

The earlier attributes attached to La Fura as 'punks' and '*enfant terribles*' were replaced by others, praising their professionalism and creativity. The talent of the group was attributed either Catalan or Spanish nationality, depending on the interest of the defining party.²² The creative staff directed by Padrisa and Ollé was a multinational one.²³

The absence of Catalan in their web pages in late 1990s has recently renewed the questioning of the group's *Catalanitat*. The opinions of visitors to the web page of *WIP* (*Work in Progress-Macbeth*, 1997) included protests because the page was in English and Castilian only. The same absence of Catalan in La Fura's *BOM* web page is for Louise Johnson a suggestion that a hundred years after the fundamental premises of *Modernisme* – which encompassed, as La Fura does, both local traditions and 'avidly global projection' – 'a whole new set of uncertainties exists' around Catalan culture (1999, 195).²⁴ Simultaneously to her critique, however, the *L'Home del Mil·lenni* (*The Millennial Man*, 1999/2000) web page was in both Catalan and Castilian.

At the same time, identifying themselves as '*fureros* and Mediterraneans', La Fura was also both ignoring strict geo-political or national frontiers and indicating another identity. '*Furero*' was indicated as a 'new' (in the sense of specific, singular, other) identity category to be first taken into account. Against essentialisations of themselves and their productions, the statements of the group resisted both fixed or unchangeable identities and restrictive artistic encapsulation. La Fura's metapolitical²⁵

²² Most of the media in Spain and Catalonia on 26 and 27 July 1992 celebrated the macro-performance directed and devised by La Fura as the most striking part of the whole ceremony and as the perfect prologue for the success of the Olympic Games.

²³ Besides Sakamoto and Müller, the production involved Judy Chabola (choreography), Peter Minshall and Chuz Uroz (costumes), Tony Miralda and Roland Olbeter (design), respectively from Japan, Germany, the USA, England, Trinidad and Tobago, Spain and Catalonia.

²⁴ Johnson is the editor of an edition of *Romance Quarterly* dedicated to 'Perspectives on Modern Catalan Culture'.

²⁵ In a published interview with Margarita Rivière, Manuel Castells uses the term 'metapolitics' (metapolitics) to describe his students at the University of California (2000, 10). Similarly to the *fureros*, Castells' students are examples of individuals who distrust market and orthodox politics, parties and government: they seek 'to conciliate the extraordinary creativity and development which they perceive in our world with the ideals of equality and solidarity, with the environment and with a meaning for their own lives' (2000, 10).

wish for changes and transgression was also translated into a search for other theatres, for another aesthetics which might reflect the possibility of changes within and beyond the performance space. Both the misleading boundaries and the shock of distinct mechanisms of Castilian and Catalan normalisations seemed to be mirrored in the confusing mix of *fureros* and improvising spectators. Private and public spaces were invaded, blurred, constructed or negotiated just as the regional and national identities may be within and beyond the Spanish state, or as the arts are within and beyond La Fura's practice.²⁶

These phenomena, inside and outside the arts, are framed by globalisation. Furthermore, globalisation and supermodernity have also prominent factors in capital mobility, the creation of mass cultures, virtual nets, labour migrations, binational and biracial couples, multiculturalism, the emergence of plural voices, and the commodification of the arts. This panorama affects distinct national identities, cultural developments and artistic texts or objects. Postmodern arts do not contradict these constructions and dislocations in their evasive moves away from fixed categories or immutable demarcations. Reacting to this context, the creation of both personal and artistic identities has been negotiated, 'making choices between traditional and contemporary, religious and secular, indigenous and imported, minor and dominant' (Pearson 1996, 5).

Artistic interdisciplinarity has been anticipating this negotiation within the arts in sites both similar and dissimilar to Catalonia. Nevertheless, drawing on Mike Pearson's discourse which assumes a direct association between Brith Gof's work and the

²⁶ Feldman (1998b) points out that Els Joglars' works propose 'the concept of nation as a performative space where what is emphasized is the *process* of fabrication and construction; nationality is thus conceived as a creative process and not as a sacred truth' (1998b7, 42). She seems to outline a similar effort undertaken by La Fura. Whilst Els Joglars has a political discourse represented by its director Albert Boadella, La Fura's political standpoints are articulated by Espuma and Tantinyà. As posed by Boadella in a published interview to Jill Lane 'who has the authority to affirm and decide what type of representation is considered legitimate?' (1996, 83). Feldman's article (1998b) is an overview of the intersections amongst political and cultural policies and Catalan identity(ies) and the role of Els Joglars' performing ambivalence within these intersections.

Welsh/English axis, it may be acknowledged that performance and colony may have a natural affinity as sites of invention against dominant neighbours (1996, 7). Brith Gof, La Fura, Allain Platell and Arne Sirens (Flanders) and Robert Lepage (Quebec) exemplify sites of invention and creation against similar dominant traditions in the theatrical arts.

Brith Gof and La Fura have both grounded their artistic works in environmental theatre but the dialogical works of both companies are differentiated by their own sites, cultures and realities. Drawing on Bakhtin's concept of carnival and dialogism to analyse performance and drama actions, Julia Kristeva approaches carnival as a mise-en-scene in which language (or idiom) slips into a 'deeper level' within which the performative actions compose a three-dimensional communication; law, 'prohibitions (representation, "monologism") and their transgression (dream, body, "dialogism") coexist' (1980, 79). La Fura's artistic performativity composed dark carnivals inspired in the cultural rituals and *fiestas* of Catalonia and Spain.

This inspiration appropriated elements from the *encierros*, pyrotechnic catharsis and risky festivities which are celebrated in Spain and Catalonia to promote the blurring of spatial zones and other aspects which link the group to carnival. The 'split speech act' that Kristeva sees as introduced by 'the scene of the carnival' highlights this relationship further: 'the *actor* and the *crowd* are each in turn simultaneously subject and addressee of the discourse. The carnival is also the bridge between the two split occurrences as well as the place where each of the terms is acknowledged: the author (actor + spectator)' (1980, 75).

The identitary issues that the *lenguaje furero* may raise seem to have been prevented by the press' quick categorisations in favour of a sensationalist, newspaper selling interest in linking the group with violence. Nevertheless, the first trilogy's production redesigned the relationship between self and other, spectator and performer,

subject and object, in a reversion of usual Western theatre practice. La Fura also shattered the usual alignment with binary relations that Schieffelin lists, like 'signifier/signified, text/reader, illusion/reality, deceit/authenticity, activity/passivity, manipulative/straightforward' (1998, 204).

The relational feature of the *lenguaje furero* was searched for through a choreographical organisation of the space and time, centring it on both the *fureros* and the spectators' bodies. These interconnected relations with movement, sound, image and body configure a scenic field. For José A. Sánchez, 'theory still compartmentalises this field into theatre, dance, mime, performance, concert, installation... and theatre is approached from the perspective of dramatic literature' (1999, 13).²⁷ Sánchez mentions La Fura as one of the most important contributions of the Spanish theatre to contemporary dramaturgies, acknowledging the interdisciplinary impulse in the aesthetic creations of the group (1999, 185). Both this artistically interdisciplinary dramaturgy and the scenic field draw attention to the exchanges between dance and theatre undertaken by the group, which the following section discusses.

8.4. Afterwords; La Fura's Dances

Discussing tendencies in European contemporary dance, Johannes Odenthal acknowledged that in the mid-1990s 'one can no longer talk about an overall style or even about a mainstream. On the contrary, it is diversity that has created perspectives in contemporary dance' (1996, 108). This similarity with theatre goes further when Odenthal points out a contemporaneous 'deconstruction of social patterns, cultural codes and gender-stereotypes' (1996, 109). This similarity decreases when he states that 'contemporary dance, or, better, dance-theatre, gives these deconstructions of current images and concepts a dramatic actuality that contemporary theatre can hardly achieve'

²⁷ 'En el ámbito de la teoría, lo escénico sigue siendo compartimentado como teatro, danza, mimo, performance, concierto, instalación... y el teatro abordado desde el privilegio de la literatura dramática.'

(1996, 109). Odenthal's assumption seems to be based on a traditional concept of theatre that La Fura contradicts.

Odenthal acknowledges 'we enter a territory somewhere between performance, dance and theatre, which obviously complicates any discourse concerning tendencies in contemporary European dance', but claims that 'maybe it is contemporary dance that evokes the actual dramatic concerns of the 1990s and renews the theatre' (1996, 110). Perhaps it is the advancing of this interdisciplinary territory within the distinct arts, permeating the 1980s and 1990s, which continuously renews and expands the margins all the arts, complicating categorical discourses. This advance might perhaps explain that whilst John Ashford points out that 'dance today is often about fallibility, the fall rather than the leap, the difficulty of it, the intricate detail, the sweat, the full engagement of the dancer's personality' (1996, 112), he seems to be also describing La Fura's theatre, Björk's music or Marc Quinn's art.

La Fura's interdisciplinary work sampled external aspects of *butoh* and dance theatre.²⁸ It happened not only through the physicality of the *fureros* dialoguing with the sonic involvement, but in the choreological organisation of the living space. In a published interview with Nick Kaye, John Cage points out that 'what characterises dance is that there are human beings and that they're in a traffic situation, and its [sic] dangerous. It's a life and death question' (1997 [1985], 20). Besides the replication of the tensions of the Castilian/Catalan axis or the postmodern questions around uncertainty, the dangerous traffic situations involving human beings which Cage relates to dance were conspicuously present within the first trilogy.

The first trilogy also seemed a reply to proxemic and spatial aspirations of the historical vanguards and took environmental theatre's experiments of the 1960s and

²⁸ On dance theatre see Servos (1984); Hoghe (1984), and Birringer (1986). Sanchez-Colberg (1996) focuses her article on investigating the path to the 1980s physical theatre and its blurred boundaries with dance theatre. For an introduction on *butoh* see Sue Stein (1986). Osaki (1998) is a valuable article to find connections between the dance theatre form and Japanese performance art.

1970s a step further. The relational feature of the *lenguaje furero* materialised a sort of blend of Adolphe Appia's dream of the 'cathedral of the future', the Futurists' desire for a smoking room, and Spanish and Catalan *fiestas*.

Appia also privileged a 'new scenic order [...] based on the presence of the human body, of the plastic and moving body' (Beacham 1993, 69). Appia's experiments with Emile Dalcroze in Hellerau in the 1910s grounded his idea of a Living Art. Appia's Living Art was to be achieved through an integration of lights, forms and music: it aimed at a living organism in which should take place the exhibition of theatre, overcoming the passivity of the spectator and involving them in the work of art. Italian Futurists utilised the broken boundaries between artistic genres to favour 'new elements of astonishment' within their provocative, and hopefully, abusive *Seratas*. Futurists claimed a room for smokers as the ideal performance space: the smoke would join audience and stage atmospheres in an 'unbroken contact, [to] create between us and the crowd a current of confidence [...within] the vivacity of a new futurist theatricality' (1995, 22). This anarchic content privileged a simultaneity of arts, sonic collages and moving assemblage to disintegrate scenic and musical harmony.

La Fura was also promoting the Artaudian 'festival', a concept which Jacques Derrida employed to define Antonin Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty's, within which

the spectator is in the center and the spectacle surrounds him [...], the distance of vision is no longer pure, cannot be abstracted from the totality of the sensory milieu; the infused spectator can no longer *constitute* his spectacle and provide himself with its object. There is no longer spectator or spectacle, but festival (1978, 244).

Together with the relational feature, the other three interdependent features of the *lenguaje furero* were responsible for going beyond the scope of the disciplines involved and to characterise an interdisciplinary language. The suppression of the fourth wall, the unusual venues away from the purpose-built theatre and the creative relationship of the nine *fureros* with choreography, dance, fine arts, music, dance theatre, music theatre and performance art reiterated the artistically interdisciplinary ground within which the

ensemble moved its audiences, and creations. 'For as long as these technical and intratheatrical revolutions do not penetrate the very foundation of western theater, they will belong to the history and to the stage that Antonin Artaud wanted to explode' (Derrida 1978, 234).

CONCLUSIONS

'Art = music, theatre, painting, object, sculpture, space, architecture, cinema / search of an own artistic language as plastic as theatrical and musical / action → movement. Cart's hangover.'¹ This undated, unsigned and hand written note, which I found within the meagre material on La Fura's pre-history in the voluminous press archives of La Fura, reiterates that from the beginnings of the group, the *fureros* did not isolate their ideas on theatre from a cross-fertilisation with other arts. Nevertheless, cross-fertilisation does not suffice to indicate an artistic interdisciplinarity. Jacques Derrida illuminates this further when he stresses that 'one would incorrectly conclude [...] that it suffices to accumulate or to juxtapose all the arts in order to create a total theater' (1978, 244). Derrida seems to recall both Georg Fuchs's understanding of theatre as being beyond a synthesis of different arts and Roland Barthes' definition of interdisciplinarity. Both were achieved by La Fura during the first trilogy.

The trilogy presented theatrical productions which took the pre-history's artistically cross-disciplinary interests to an interdisciplinary level beyond the involved disciplines. The trilogy diagnosed mutations in artistic certainties, unfolded epistemological slides within theatrical language and influenced other practices. The methodological, the spatial, the relational and the cross-disciplinary features of the *lenguaje furero* entwined into a fourfold and interdisciplinary concept of theatre materialised in *Accions*, *Suz/o/Suz* and *Tier Mon*.

In a personal conversation with the author in 1999 in Barcelona, Catalan film maker Bet Giravent affirmed that La Fura is still living on the shock and fascination

¹ 'Arte = musica, teatre, pintura, objecte, escultura, espai, arquitectura, cinema / busqueda de un llenguatge artistic propi tan plastic com teatral i musical / accio → movement. Ressaca del carro.' 'Cart's hangover' relates the note to the first tour of La Fura with *Vida i Miracles del Pagès Tertno i la seva Dona Teresina* (1979).

provoked by *Accions*. Although the period with which this study is concerned ends in 1989, a look at the further work of La Fura during the 1990s may not only examine Giravent's assumption but help my conclusions on La Fura and artistic interdisciplinarity.

The second trilogy of La Fura during the 1990s (*Noun*, *MTM* and *Manes*) could no longer match all the features of the *lenguaje furero*. The works collectively devised, directed and performed by all the group's founder members ended in 1990 with *Tier Mon*. The *lenguaje furero* was also showing signs of exhaustion in the late 1980s. This exhaustion was in part responsible for Marcel·lí Antúnez's departure/expulsion from the group. This marked a need for the company to develop new works and processes. *Noun* (1990-92) and *MTM* (1994-96) added new experiments with mediated images and increased the cross-disciplinarity with image, sound and media arts. Nevertheless, the second trilogy was gradually characterised by an increasing sampling of elements from the first trilogy. *Manes* (1996-98) was a conspicuous remix of the accomplishments of the group during the 1980s.

A look at Catalan dictionaries reveals that one of the possible translations for the word 'manes' is 'shadows of the dead' or 'ghosts'.² *Manes* exposed La Fura's cross-disciplinarity with La Fura itself and its artistic ghosts. Against a possible stagnation after a decade of working together, the *fureros* have formed associations with other artists and media providing the company with new stimulations; a type of positive contamination to ensure that the artistic interdisciplinary currents continue to nourish the work.

Both the second trilogy and the other theatre works up to 1999 (*F@ust versió 3.0* and *Ombra*) gradually gave space to isolated directors directing auditioned actors

² Pompeu Fabra's, Joan Coromines' and Antoni Maria Alcover and Francesc de B. Moll's dictionaries present 'manes' as 'ombra dels morts.'

performing adaptations of written texts for seated audiences in purpose-built theatres. These new creations totally defaced the *lenguaje furero*. In an unpublished interview with the author in 1998, Miki Espuma argued that the ensemble also considered *F@ust versió 3.0* (1998-2000) and *Ombra* (1998-2000) *lenguaje furero* works.³ The absence of three features of a fourfold concept of theatre, however, reduces the legitimacy of his argument. The company then announced *ØBS* (2000) as the seventh work of the *lenguaje furero* and it is both my view and that of a number of Spanish and Catalan critics that this is indeed the case.⁴ *ØBS* took again all the features of the *lenguaje furero*, with the exception of the collective creative devising and performing work which had been such a key feature of the first trilogy.

The *lenguaje furero*'s feature of artistic cross-disciplinarity has remained as a prominent aesthetic principle of the group. This principle has been the group's value of exchange in securing invitations to work in different media in 2000: this comprises a range which goes from opera (*D. Q. en Barcelona*), video art (*Rojo*) or music theatre (*White Foam*) to the organisation of outdoor and indoor events for multinationals and public institutions (*Inana & Sons*). This range has been amplified with new projects such as art curation as well as new incursions in cinema promised in 2001.⁵

This comparison between both trilogies does not intend to diminish the artistically cross-disciplinary alchemies which the group continues to exercise. Remaining features of the *lenguaje furero*, the use of sophisticated audio-visual hardware and the technological lavishness of La Fura during the 1990s continue to fascinate and divide spectators, and critics, in new or familiar cities visited by the group. However, the first

³ Barcelona, 27 November 1998.

⁴ See for instance, Pablo Ley, 'El retorno de la [sic] Fura dels Baus', *El País*, 6 November 2000, p. 52.

⁵ While Pep Gatell and Jürgen Müller devised the war scenes which close Carlos Saura's *Goya en Burdeos* (1999), Carles Padrís and Àlex Ollé will direct the provisionally titled *Fausto 5.0*, scripted by film director and screen writer Fernando León (*Barrio* 1998). Alongside Peter Greenaway, Emir Kusturica, Robert Wilson and Achille Bonito Oliva, Padrís is one of the curators of the Valencia Biennial due to happen in 2001.

trilogy seems to illustrate a defamiliarisation of theatrical certainties which now seems impossible for the group to repeat. Drawing on Giravent, it may be assumed that the group still benefits from the epistemological questioning that the first trilogy launched. And it is this interrogation which is a crucial point to define the artistically interdisciplinary leap.

ØBS, *F@ust versió 3.0* or *Ombra* mark a cross-disciplinarity with theatre elements such as an author (respectively Shakespeare, Goethe and García Lorca), characters, verbal texts, dialogues, so on and so forth. While the two latter works were staged in proscenium-arch theatres for seated audiences, *ØBS* and *White Foam* (2000) took again the three remaining features of the *lenguaje furero*. *ØBS* maintained the cross-disciplinarity with theatre, adding to it elements of humour which were not present in the group's trajectory beforehand. Interdisciplinarity means to go beyond the involved disciplines and La Fura has been attempting to supplant La Fura itself, through the group's incursions in opera, music theatre, computer art, video art, and traditional theatre. The epistemological slide may still be there in these new works, for many spectators and critics, but the impact may be diluted for those who have seen the works of the first trilogy, when the mutation in the theatrical language was diagnosed by critics, and spectators (Cerezzo 1986; Borrás 1986; Francesch 1988; Salabert 1988; Ferrer and Saumell 1988). Therefore, it is up to La Fura to clash with its previous trajectory to achieve a new mutation; the group's constant attempt towards this objective, however, is what characterises La Fura as an interdisciplinary theatre company.

The acknowledgement of an interdisciplinary level is also decided by the experience and interests of each spectator being exposed to these interdisciplinary intensities. The spectator decides if the performance goes beyond the familiar limits of the involved arts and if it indicates mutations in her or his understanding of theatre.

These facts also recall that neither interdisciplinary nor unwritten theatre will guarantee a richer or more meaningful performance than a theatrical performance which privileges cross-disciplinary exchanges with literature.

My employment of artistic interdisciplinarity, therefore, does not aim at inducing the acceptance of one sort of theatre. Ecologist Rogério Parentoni, director of an interdisciplinary group of studies at the Federal University of Minas Gerais, Brazil, sees 'the beauty of theory' in helping us to acknowledge not only the fact that each difference is the singular expression of a great diversity of forms and states (2000, 9). For him, theory has aesthetic functions which allows the acknowledgement of these singularities of differences as well as the consciousness of a necessity to co-exist with oppositions without attempting to uniform them (2000, 9). Artistic interdisciplinarity may help the acknowledgement of the particularities and perspectives involved in practising and analysing theatre.

La Fura is one of the artistic manifestations of Catalonia, which has been exporting an exciting interdisciplinary idea of theatre. The relevance of this may be recognised in the acknowledged influence of La Fura in groups from Oslo (Aurin Teatret and Pain Solution) or Buenos Aires (De La Guarda). Richard Eyre indicated De La Guarda as the freshest example of the constant mutations in the theatrical language.⁶ De La Guarda's festive sampling of La Fura is visible in the suspended flights, sonic accompaniment, cross-disciplinarity with new circus, and especially in the actions amongst the audience which have been surprising critics and spectators not used to La Fura's works.

La Fura, Els Joglars, Els Comediants, La Cubana, Carles Santos are Catalan examples of interdisciplinary companies. These are examples of artists who have

⁶ 'Changing Stages', BBC 2, 10 December 2000.

escaped from a sterile artistic panorama in Spain which José A. Sánchez (1999) sees as directly caused by the political changes since 1992.⁷ Beyond this and the *Teatro Independiente's* legacy, both Barcelona-based Em Conservas' performance art theatre and General Electrica's dance performance theatre are new additions to the principles of alternative theatre in questioning aesthetic margins charted by rigid certainties. In May 1999 Pablo Ley, *El País'* theatre critic celebrated Em Conservas' work *Femina Ex-Machina* and the small space run by Simona Levi in the Carrer Sant Pau as a return of these principles. Both companies will join together an artistic centre of work, Fràgil (Fragile), to compose together their artistic *puncta* and *rasa*. Both companies present indexes of a cross-fertilisation with La Fura.⁸

Another important indication/result of La Fura's interdisciplinarity is the attendance of young spectators. Already in 1984, Xavier Fàbregas was one of the critics enchanted with *Accions'* long queues of young spectators, which he saw as unusual.⁹ Having seen works of La Fura in Brazil, Britain, Holland and Spain, I have seen that the 18-25 age band is still the major part of the company's eclectic audiences. With *Atlántida* in 1996 to *D. Q.* in 2000, La Fura has also been bringing younger audiences to opera, another art form like theatre which may be considered by artists and critics as anachronistic and closed to aesthetic transformation. Both artistic interdisciplinarity and La Fura contradict this vision and celebrate these ever-changing artistic languages based on the live presence and creativity of performers and spectators.

⁷ On these changes see the final part of Graham and Labanyi (1995) or Sánchez's introduction (1999).

⁸ See Pablo Ley, 'El mejor impulso alternativo', *El País*, 21 May 1999, p. 53. Simona Levi, director, author and performer of *Ex-Femina Machina* (1999-2000), has worked with La Fura and some critics noticed similarities amongst both groups. See for instance, unsigned, 'Fabrica Europa', <http://www.fabricaeuropa.net/PRIMA.html>. Having seen the production with Mercè Saumell, both of us agreed in the original similarity with *Accions*. General Electrica's staging of dance shows in unusual venues like the ballroom dance club La Paloma in Barcelona, and the blurring of acting and performing boundaries together with the occasional suppression of the fourth wall are indexes of a possible influence of La Fura.

⁹ See Fàbregas, 'Una estética de la violencia', *La Vanguardia*, 12 July 1984, p. 47 or Miguel Bayón, 'El triunfo de la farsa', *Cambio 16*, 654, 11 June 1984, pp. 116-19.

La Fura's exchanges with already interdisciplinary art forms (performance art, music theatre and dance theatre) reiterates that the demand for open and interdisciplinary arts criticism is not a 1980s phenomenon. The *Natya-Sastra* shows that artistic interdisciplinarity is not a new phenomenon for either theatre theories or practices. Nevertheless, artistic interdisciplinarity still assaults passionately protected specialisms and comfortable zones of criticism. The conspicuous presence of interdisciplinarity in the arts enlarges the scope of specialisation required to analyse any art at the border of a new millennium. As posited by the *Guardian's* critic Mark Lawson in 2000, 'it's much tougher to be a critic amid this rubble.'¹⁰

In December 2000 the *Guardian* proposed that its critics switch disciplines for a week 'partly a jokey exercise in journalistic cross-dressing' and also as 'an element of serious inquiry into what a critic should be and know.'¹¹ The first chosen critic was Michael Billington, sent out not to the theatre, but to London's Tate Modern. Billington states that theatre criticism was easier, 'both physically and intellectually, compared to our art-reviewing colleagues. We sit back in chairs while people tell us stories. The art critic not only has to keep moving but then has to evoke in words an essentially non-verbal experience.'¹²

The *lenguaje furero* contradicts Billington's assumption in its questioning of certainties in different artistic fields. The result of this questioning by artists who launched other understandings of theatre should not be seen as a less pure sort of theatre, but as other theatres which call into question epistemological and aesthetic frontiers, to those indicated by Billington. When these other understandings help to re-define these frontiers, an artistically interdisciplinary work has emerged.

¹⁰ Mark Lawson, 'Swapping Notes', *Guardian*, 11 December 2000, p. 2.

¹¹ Lawson, p. 2.

¹² Michael Billington, 'So I Put on my Art Critic's Hat – and my Old Trainers', *Guardian*, 11 December 2000, pp. 2-6, p. 2.

Alan Read stresses that 'to "think theatre" is to transgress boundaries in the name of a more relevant theatre' (1993, 59). Marvin Carlson states that 'the most intense and productive life of culture takes place on the boundaries' (1996, 191). This democratic crossing of disciplinary boundaries, however, clashes with the maintenance of known frontiers and art forms. Antúnez defends an artistically interdisciplinary position as necessary for understanding of his work, 'which is pluralist, but that is exceptional as far as what is going on in the Spanish State is concerned' (Giannetti 1998, 28).

The *ex-furero* seems to relate centralism to disciplinary imposition, recalling the secular tension of his home site(s). La Fura displays that aesthetics may help to provide perspectives of understanding a nation or a culture. It cannot be considered a mere coincidence that innovative work such as Robert Lepage's, Allain Platell and Arne Sirens', Brith Gof's and La Fura, Els Joglars, Els Comediants or La Cubana's come all from regions such as Quebec, Flanders, Wales and Catalonia, which face similar conflicts with their States (Canada, Belgium, Great Britain and Spain). All of them show pacific responses to or creative evasion from the imposition of identities and disciplinary exclusions. Nevertheless, neither the problematic side of interdisciplinarity nor the struggles to keep or evade from fixed limits and interests are exclusively Canadian, Belgian, British or Spanish, but rather postmodern.

In an interview broadcast on the Internet, Ping Chong explains that 'I don't identify myself as an Asian-American artist, but I'm labelled that now. I wasn't labelled that way in the 1980s. Back then, I was labelled an avant-garde artist.'¹³ In an earlier interview with Nick Kaye, the theatre director, choreographer, video, performance and installation artist affirms that 'the problem of being someone who does not fit in one or the other form is that you get trashed from both sides' (1996, 148). This double trashing

¹³ See <http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~ofa/spectrum/sep99/ping.html>.

is not exclusive to the arts fields as 'Cablinasian', bi-racialities, bi-sexualities, 'modern primitives' or Feminist anthropology indicates.¹⁴ Thence, this refusal of hybridism and interdisciplinary negotiations may even achieve tragic proportions: before killing Asian English Zahid Mubarek in Feltham young offenders' institution, Robert Steward wrote a letter to a friend, mentioning that 'I'm going to nail bomb the Asian community of Great Norbury. Its [sic] all about immigrants getting smuggled into here, Romanians, Pakis [sic], niggers [sic], Chinkles [sic], taking over the country and using us to breed half castes.'¹⁵

Less psychotic or radical clinging to supposedly fixed class, racial, sexual, identitary or epistemological limits also comprise the co-existence of paradoxes within postmodernism. We are, however, living a revision of disciplinary immobilities in several arts and sciences, which may even question untouchable scientific paradigms like Albert Einstein's relativity. Since 1996, cosmologists Andy Albrecht and João Magueijo have been working with the hypothesis that the speed of light can change: this means that Einstein's principles which revolutionised physics and our understanding of our 15 billion year old Universe are being revisited. Furthermore, it implies that the Big Bang which has been considered the birth of our Universe was just one in a series of endless Big Bangs.¹⁶

In a broadcast interview for Channel 4's Equinox programme in November 2000, Magueijo states that

of course I respect relativity enormously and I have this feeling that it is only now that I have contradicted relativity that I really understand it. And it's just because I've gone against it that I'm showing my full respect to the great man. This is not at all trying to

¹⁴ See pages 55 to 58 and 76 of this study.

¹⁵ Paul Kelso, 'Psychopath Gets Life for Beating Cell Mate to Death', *Guardian*, 2 November 2000, pp. 1-2, p. 1.

¹⁶ The Channel 4's programme Equinox broadcast on October 2000, *Einstein's Biggest Blunder* is a valuable introduction to Albrecht and Magueijo's research. It is available on the Internet at http://www.channel4.com/equinox/ein_summary.html. Magueijo has his own webpage on the Internet. See <http://euclid.tp.ph.ic.ac.uk/~magueijo>.

contradict Einstein, it's just trying to take things one step further. Eventually of course it will be nature that will decide whether this is true or not (2000, 15 of 15).

Drawing on Magueijo, it must be said that neither artistic interdisciplinarity nor La Fura contradict or disrespect theatre: both of them also take 'things one step further'. They may be considered to threaten to demolish the 'foundations' of twentieth century theatre only if this is understood as an art which has to defend disciplinary limits and certainties. Until the next Big Bang hits our Universe, the arts will probably keep on changing their languages and anarchic functions. This constant transformation may make desperate those who base their practices either on fixed limits or on the fear of taking risks. This is not the case of either interdisciplinarity or La Fura.

This thesis is one partial reading on both artistic interdisciplinarity and La Fura dels Baus. As articulated by Roland Barthes, this assumption 'is not simply the result of the failing of the person here presenting them (who in many respects has anyway done no more than pick up what is being developed round about him)' (1977, 164). Whilst this thesis diminishes the absence of critical studies on La Fura, artistic interdisciplinarity remains as a territory to be further explored. The central objective of this thesis was to contribute to similar efforts in re-mapping an ever-changing theatrical language. I hope this study may help other studies and practices which seek to investigate possible exchanges and mutually enriching artistic modes, respecting singularities and celebrating differences.

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APPENDIX 1

CHRONOGRAM OF WORKS

1979

- First musical show with performance at Saint Ponç Fair;
- *Vida i Miracles del Pagès Tarino i la seva Dona Teresina (Life and Miracles of the Peasant Tarino and his Wife Teresina)*, street theatre performance with music.

1980

- *El Diluvi (The Deluge)*, *Sant Jordi S. A. (Saint George S.A.)* and *El Viatge al País Furabaus (The Journey to the Furabaus Country)*, *animació* works;
- *Sercata (Parade)*, street theatre performance with music;
- *Patatús (Shock)*, street theatre.

1981

- *Forat Furero (Furero – or Ferret's – Hole)*, street theatre with music and circus;
- *Sercata*, *Patatús* and *animació* shows.

1982

- *Correfocs*, street performance with music and circus skills, first collective creation of the nine *fureros*;
- *Electrofocs (Electricfires)*, night version of *Correfocs*. Performances at the 1982 Tàrraga II Street Theatre Festival.

1983

- Supporting theatrical role in singer and composer Oriol Tramvia's show, *Via 00*, at the Teatre Poliorama in Barcelona;
- *Festival Fura Rècord's*, street theatre with cabaret and circus skills;
- *Mòvil Xoc (Mobile Shock)*, street theatre show at the 1983 Tàrraga III Street Theatre Festival;
- *Mòvil Xoc* and *Accions (Actions)*, street theatre and performance theatre, respectively, at the streets and inside a pedestrian subway in Sitges, during the city's XVI Theatre Festival.

1984

- *Accions, Alteració Física d'un Espai (Actions, Physical Alteration of a Space)*, continuously performed up to 1987). First *lenguaje furero* production;
- Scenic actions in different points of Barcelona and Madrid.

1985

- *Suz/o/Suz (1985-91)*, second *lenguaje furero* production.

1986

- *AJÖE*, first single recorded by the group with musics 'Mareá' and 'Ajöe' from *Suz/o/Suz*. Edited and released by Gasa/Dro, Madrid.

1987

- *SUZ*, first LP of the group (Virgin Spain, Madrid).

1988

- *Tier Mon*, third *lenguaje furero* production (1988-90);
- 'Automàtics' exhibition in Madrid;
- The three productions of the first trilogy are performed at the Mercat de les Flors in Barcelona.

1989

- First workshops are given for the Institut del Teatre;
- *ERG*, second LP/cassette and first CD of the group (Virgin Spain, Madrid);
- Participation in Pere Portabella's film, *Pont de Varsovia*.

1990-92

- *Mugra*, performance and video show in collaboration with Rebecca Allen for Barcelona Art Futura;
- *Noun* (1990-92), *lenguaje furero* work;
- *Noun*, new CD and LP (Virgin Records, Madrid);
- *Mar Mediterrània (Mediterranean Sea)*, macro-performance for the opening ceremony of the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona;
- *Foc Forn (Fire Stove)*, dance disco for children, using the truss scenery of *Noun*;
- Musical concert for the closing ceremony of the 1992 Paralympic Games in Barcelona.

1993

- *L'Enderroc de la Farga (Farga's Destruction)*, performance with machines and performers;
- First workshops given in Madrid;
- Participation in Catalan TV 3 series, *Arnau*.

1994

- *El Caganer*, video and cinetic sculpture installation;
- *KRAB, Big Bull Female*, new CD (La Fura, Barcelona);
- *MTM* (1994-96), *lenguaje furero* production;
- *Um Sonho Bom (A Good Dream)*, macro-performance at the Maracanã football stadium in Rio de Janeiro. First experiments with digital theatre.

1995

- *MTM*, first CD ROM (La Baus Fundició, Barcelona);
- *Work in Progress*, performance in collaboration with Brith Gof;
- Workshops in Catalonia, Portugal and Brazil.

1996

- Manuel de Falla's *Atlántida*, first opera work;
- *Pepsíclope y la Transformación (Pepsíclope and the Transformation)*, macro-street performance for Pepsi;
- *Manes (1996-98)*, *lenguaje furero*;
- *Manes*, CD (La Baus Fundició, Barcelona);
- Performance at the Calatrava Tower in Barcelona for a National Congress of Architects;
- *El Molde (The Form)*, performance for Volkswagen;
- Workshops in Mexico, Belgium, Argentina, Germany and Spain.

1997

- *Simbiosis*, macro performance and tour for Mercedes Benz;
- *Simbiosis*, CD (La Fura, Barcelona);
- *Accions*, CD with the first *lenguaje furero* production's sound tracking (Linea Alternativa, Alcalá de Henares)
- *Okupas (Squatters)*, rave action;
- *Dadle Café (Give him Coffee)*, performance in purpose-built theatre for the premiere of Marcos Zurinaga's film, *Morte em Granada (Death in Granada)*;
- Debussy and D'Annunzio's *El Martiri de San Sebastián (Saint Sebastian Martyrdom)*, second opera work;
- *WIP/Macbeth*, further experiment with digital theatre, connecting actors and performances in four European cities with the Malic Teatre in Barcelona;
- Workshops in Helsinki;
- 'Mu', sonic and kinetic installation.

1998

- *F@ust versió 3.0*, performance theatre;
- *Poeta*, collaboration with the Ballet Nacional de España (scenography and direction);
- *F@ust versió 3.0*, CD (La Fura, Barcelona);
- *FMOL*, experience with musical authorship through internet recorded in CD (Fundación Autor, Barcelona);
- *Ombra*, performance theatre.

1999

- Berlioz's *The Damnation of Faust* at the Salzburg Opera Festival;
- *Faustshadow*, outdoor performance in Austria, connected via video conference to Barcelona's Plaza Catalunya, during the solar eclipses;
- *Furamòvil*, a spectacle-truck for theme parks and *fiestas*;
- Directing and devising of war scenes for Carlos Saura's film *Goya en Burdeos*;
- Performance for Peugeot in Buenos Aires;

- *Ombra*, CD (SGAE/La Fura, Barcelona);
- *L'Home del Mil·leni (The Millennial Man)*, macro-performance for Barcelona's new year's eve.

2000

- Inauguration of a new bridge near Barcelona's harbour;
- Untitled performance and conference in the International Meeting of Scenic Arts in Belo Horizonte, Brasil;
- *Inana & Sons*, outdoor performance with huge puppet;
- *Rojo (Red)*, performance and video art;
- *D. Q. en Barcelona (Don Quijote in Barcelona)*, new opera work;
- *White Foam*, music theatre;
- *ØBS, lenguaje furero* seventh production and CD;
- *D. Q.*, first DVD (Liceu, Barcelona).