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***THE CRUELTY IN LA FURA DELS BAUS
A STUDY ON SHOCK EFFECT***

**THROUGH:
*SUZ/O/SUZ
IMPERIUM
DEGUSTACION DE TITUS ANDRONICUS***

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PROLOGUE

In these times, when precisely what is happening could not be imagined, and when what must happen can not be imagined, and if it could it would not happen;... In the empire bereft of imagination, where man is dying of spiritual starvation while not feeling spiritual hunger, where pens are dipped in blood and swords in ink, that which is not thought must be done, but that which is only thought inexpressible¹. Karl Kraus

Kraus wrote the speech above two months after the outbreak of the First World War; a war that changed the map of the world drastically and changed human consciousness as it was emerging into a horrific state. Afterwards, Walter Benjamin used this quote to share the crisis of experience and image through the modern world, again in a period where the conflicts of the war were shocking societies. However, the specific quote can be used in current times, as it seems that events constantly overtake human capacity to imagine them. In a world that continuously changes with rhythms that often cannot be digested, society strives to accept, manage and live with these changes. Images of our society stem from our experiences, thus, we feel spiritual starvation without spiritual hunger. While we are confronted with continuous changes the capacity to feel comes after the capacity to manage practically each of this altered reality.

In former years but even now, theatre had the power to entertain, revolt, change, state ideologies and function as a way of expression, which indicated also each nation's social history. The chosen subject of this dissertation shows how theatre can still alert the emotional, mental and physical reality of its audiences. The effect described comes mostly through shock, which transforms each time the spectators into a non passive audience that experience physical and emotional changes during performances from the Catalan theatre group La Fura dels Baus.

During the last decades performances have established an experiential audience event via the recreation of visceral experience. It was interesting to investigate a post-modern theatre company and explore its strategies to find connections with theatrical

¹ Ackbar Abbas, "On Fascination: Walter Benjamin's Images", *New German Critique*, no. 48 (autumn 1989): 43.

history. La Fura dels Baus are known for their urban theatre, the use of unusual settings and the blurring of the boundaries that separate the audience from the performers. The first observations were that the work of La Fura dels Baus can be connected with the ideas of Antonin Artaud and his theatrical approach.

What interests me is the relation of their work to the idea of Artaud's 'total spectacle' and *theatre of cruelty*. As with Artaud², the company follows the idea that through a variety of physical and emotive stage behavior typified with violence and hysteria, a kinetic or emotional relationship between the organic life of the actor and his audience is created. The energy must flow both ways so that the two forces fuse together to create an ecstasy which is comparable only to that in a religious or sexual encounter³. My decision is to examine beyond the company's connection with Antonin Artaud and research the impact of their strategies towards the audience. Why choose cruel theatre language, how does this language attract the audiences and how does it have a direct impact on them?

Due to the company's origin it was difficult to find information written about them in English. However, LFdB are mentioned in some researches and academic papers usually for their radical theatric language. Most of these papers view the company as an example of post-modernist theatre that makes adaptations and uses non representative ways of reaching the audience. However, in other researches LFdB is presented historically, showing its development from a street performance group into an enormous production company⁴. The connection of LFdB with *theatre of cruelty* has been mentioned in some articles, although the company reacts negatively to these statements⁵. Nevertheless, non extensive research has been carried out on the company's dramaturgy in relation to Antonin Artaud's theatre and how this specific dramaturgy aims to affect the spectators radically through shock.

² Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*, trans., Mary Caroline Richards (New York: Grove Press Books, 1958).

³ Helen Freshwater, *Theatre and Audience* (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009): 10.

⁴ Fernando Antonio Pinheiro Villar de Queiroz . *Artistic Interdisciplinarity and La Fura dels Baus 1979-1989* (PhD diss., London: Queen Mary College, University of London, n.d).

⁵ Antonio Sanchez, "La Fura dels Baus and the legacy of Antonin Artaud", *Contemporary theatre Review*, Vol. 16, no.4 (2006 n.d).

In the first chapter of this thesis, the company will be introduced as post-dramatic illustrating their strategies and their direct connection with Artaud's ideas. By demonstrating this relationship the work of the company will be contextualized. In addition, to analyze and demonstrate a clear connection between the company and Artaud, an extended description of Artaud's approach to theatre will be given, as he illustrated in *Theatre and its Double*. The elaboration on LFdB and their connection with *theatre of cruelty* will be examined in three different parts: Position in space/ Role of Violence/ Stimulation of senses. Each of these parts reveals a different shock impact towards the audience and provides the framework for developing this shock effect.

The second chapter of this thesis is an introduction on the *spectator* and on the reasons which the shock effect occurs so drastically to the spectator. It is important to frame what is considered to be shocking. To define shock Walter Benjamin⁶ will be discussed, as according to him, when people are confronted with a series of images that continuously move and change, they cannot react to those images since they are not given enough time to do so. This theory will be related to the way La Fura dels Baus uses images to instigate shocking emotions in the audience. Moreover, the fact that the performances of La Fura dels Baus address mass audiences gives intensity to the effects of their staging. The notion of mass audiences will be exemplified through the theories of "crowd psychology" and specifically to the theories of Gustave Le Bon⁷.

The last chapter of this research paper deals with the illustration of the shock effect in the work of La Fura dels Baus. The creation of shock is demonstrated through three case studies and is elaborated through the same parts of Artaud's strategies.

Firstly, in *position in space* La Fura dels Baus will be demonstrated as a site specific company, where the unconventional theatrical spaces contribute to the final aesthesis of their performances. The analysis of theatrical space will be demonstrated through the performance *Suz/o/Suz*, which shows how positioning the audience and the

⁶ Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, trans., Harry Zorn, ed., Hannah Arendt (London: Pimlico, 1999).

⁷ Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (London: T.F Unwin, 1903).

performers into the same space affects the perception of the show. In addition, this research is contextualized by Sergei Eisenstein's theory of "attraction". His theory supports the idea that changes in the space play a role in the aesthetic perception of the spectator and furthermore, how in the space several "attractions" urge the audience to have certain reactions.

Secondly, the *role of violence* will illustrate how the use of violent stage language has a direct impact on the audience. La Fura dels Baus uses the human body as the carrier of meaning which gives an interpretation in its interaction with other theatrical or non- theatrical elements. This part will be illustrated through the term "synaesthesia" and additionally "uncanny". "Synaesthesia" is defined as the production of sensation in one part of the body resulting from a stimulus applied to, or perceived by, another part. An "uncanny" effect is often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, as when something that we have hitherto regarded as imaginary appears before us as reality, or when a symbol takes over the full functions of the thing it symbolizes⁸. This part will be demonstrated through the performance *Imperium*, where the company uses a violent theatrical language leading the audience to a visceral experience, through shock.

The last subchapter, *stimulation of senses*, will illustrate how the manipulation of artistic principles and techniques are manipulated in such a way that the body and mind of the spectators are stimulated. LFdB present a total spectacle, where sound, light, space and video installations, contribute to the final stage result. For this part the performance *Degustacion de Titus Andronicus* will be used as it stimulated all five senses of the audience.

Furthermore, in order to support the main theories in this research paper, I have used a variety of articles and additional theories, which demonstrate the complete image of LFdB. The company presents a total spectacle by means beyond interpretation. By bombarding the audiences with often unwelcome sensations all the theatrical elements that are being used create a visceral experience. The

⁸ Jan Niklas Howe, "Familiarity and no Pleasure: The uncanny as an aesthetic emotion", *Image and Narrative*, Vol. 11, no. 3 (n.d 2010): 54.

creators of the group named themselves anarchists⁹ and used radical methods to get re- actions from audiences.

⁹ Parallel Worlds Portrait, ed. "How the artists' collective La Fura dels Baus developed from Catalan street theater into a global cultural benchmark", *The Focus- Egon Zehnder International*, Vol. XV/1, no.48 (n.d):50, accessed April 12, 2012. www.egonzehnder.com.

CHAPTER I

I.I AN INTRODUCTION IN LA FURA DELS BAUS

The street theatre company La Fura dels Baus was founded in 1979. The makers explain that “*Making theatre is a kind of therapy for us, something we had to do to fight against prudery*”¹⁰. The company chose the name *Fura* as they believe that is something that we all carry inside ourselves, an unbridled part of our ego. *Fura* means anger and the makers often explained that with their theatre they try to release this anger inside themselves¹¹. Although they started as a small street theater group, they developed to a physically high- voltage theatre and have managed to transcend the alternative audience that watched their street performances, and to project themselves to a broader audience.

Until the early 1980’s the group was associated with street theatre practice, under the influence of *Els Joglars*’, an image based theatre group, and *Els Comediants*. The group started developing at that time another creative pattern. These groups were the first generation of *Teatro Independiente* and LFdB is considered to be the second generation¹². *Teatro Independiente* was a movement which emphasized its opposition to Franco’s dictatorship. After the creation of their first trilogy (1983) with *Accions*, *Suz/o/Suz* and *Tier Mon*, the company entered its second period in the movement *La Movida Madrileña*¹³. The movement was principally fermented in Madrid but it was also influential in other regions. Their ideology was a combination of political and cultural freedom in a conservative Spain where social and political life had to adjust to modern social values. The three productions aimed to change traditional theatre and create a radical aesthesis in the audience which also formed the company’s representative *furan language*.

¹⁰ Parallel Worlds Portrait, 50.

¹¹ Ibid., 52.

¹² Pinheiro Villar de Queiroz, *Artistic Interdisciplinarity*, 37.

¹³ Ibid., 39.

*Furan language*¹⁴, involves performing in non-conventional theatre spaces where the audience co- exists with the performers in the same space leading to their physical and emotional interaction with the exchange of different arts, such as music, fine arts, performance art and dance. The unconventional spaces where they perform also provide a framework for continuous transformation through the constant movement of themselves and the audience. The energy of each performance changes depending on the interaction with the audience. Even though all the elements of the performance are calculated without the audience, the performance's outcome depends on the audience. Their theatre offers the audience a combination of an aural, musical, kinetic, physical and sensorial experience. Furthermore, the role of mass audiences, mass performers, and stage constructions are a few of the typical features of this company.

In the 1990's the company entered her third and current period of diversification of activities in different artistic disciplines such as opera, dance, public events and cinema. The different periods of LFdB form their endless exploration of the performing arts. During this period LFdB uses a conventional Italianate stage more often, where the company applies its particular theatrical language by incorporating resources such as video and virtual technology. In text- based theatre La Fura dels Baus continues to demand the audience's participation. The work of the company is characterized by its explorations into the idea of a total theatre experience. Through the experience of total theatre, all the theatrical elements, such as light, music, movement, text, video, have an individual role in the final artwork, which lead to a total experience for the audiences. The work of La Fura dels Baus as a post- dramatic example does not represent but present a situation¹⁵, a fantasy, a dream or a nightmare.

The human body is something considered sacred and is the great protagonist of La Fura dels Baus¹⁶. The body of the performers is stretched to the limits of human movement to create illusions in the audience of which acts are real or not, which gives

¹⁴.Pinheiro Villar de Queiroz, *Artistic Interdisciplinarity*, 40.

¹⁵ Hans- Thies Lehman, *Postdramatic theatre*, trans., Karen J. Munby (New York: Routledge, 2006): 83-84.

¹⁶ *La Fura dels Baus 1979-2004* (Madrid: Sociedad Editorial Eleca Espana, 2004): 390.

an aesthesis of carnality and mysticism to their work. Over the years, they have created a transgressive and spectacular language that knows no limits to what is presented, for example naked bodies are being tortured or giant constructions surround the audience and the performers. Quite often in their performances the performers are in the process of trying to surface their repressed emotions. This process is transformed into communicative gestures and actions on stage which require a strenuously cruel discipline¹⁷ as Antonin Artaud's theatre. Together with the company's other important element, rhythm, the performances are dominated by immediate action. Rhythm works as the basis of effectiveness and as the ordering element of the visual, aural and tactile stimuli¹⁸.

The company yearns for the audience's reaction or even participation. The way that the company chooses to interact with the audience is by making aggressive attacks towards the spectators and also between the performers. LFdB state that in their performances the spectator performs while running or trying to avoid being injured, which results in an active audience that contributes to the final artwork¹⁹. The company was actively involved in the art movements against Franco's dictatorship and supported the ideas of national identity and freedom. It developed the use of violent language in the theatre in an attempt to awaken a passive audience or society. Thus, this characteristic has remained the most important feature in their performances since LFdB targets to challenge the spectator to feel and experience each radical moment.

In order to explore LFdB's aim to offer a visceral experience by shocking the audience, it is necessary to examine their performances that have the characteristics of the *furan language* which also refer to Antonin Artaud's *theatre of cruelty*. Thus, it was chosen as case studies performances that have all the characteristics that *furan language* shares.

¹⁷Artaud, trans., Richards, 60.

¹⁸ *La Fura dels Baus 1979-2004*, 120.

¹⁹ Pinheiro Villar de Queiroz, *Artistic Interdisciplinarity*, 40.

I.II THE RELATION WITH THEATRE OF CRUELTY

La Fura dels Baus' dramaturgy is strongly related to the theatre of Antonin Artaud. Artaud believed that contemporary theatre of his period (1930s- 40s), should employ means that are immediate and direct to stimulate the senses of the audience. Through this intense and stimulated new acting and directing techniques, the unconscious mind of the creators would speak to the unconscious mind of each spectator, thus, every performance could have a purifying, cleansing and transfiguring effect to the audiences²⁰.

Artaud wished to stimulate the senses of the spectators and lead them to experience a journey of magic, rituality, and deep sensation through the dramaturgical strategies; transforming the audience to active viewers. *"This theatre will furnish each spectator with the truthful precipitates of dreams, in which his taste for crime, his erotic obsessions, his savagery, his chimeras, his utopian sense of life and matter, even his cannibalism, pour out, on a level not counterfeit and illusionary, but inferior"*²¹. Artaud believed, and now LFdB follow in his footsteps, that a performance should take the audience out of itself whilst seducing it and then returning it to reality without entirely releasing it from what had taken place.

La Fura dels Baus like Artaud mingle spectators and actors in the same space, enveloping both groups in Artaud's ritualistic action to recruit the audience as participants. This theatre includes the actions and utterances of the visitor as a constitutive element. With this dramaturgical strategy the spectators are in a state of confusion as they are part of the spectacle and become vulnerable to the bombardment of the cruel actions that take place. The actor's cruel acts originate from the presentation of human fears, nightmares and dreams, which form to offer a sensory performance.

Albert Bermel, a theatre critic, lecturer and playwright in his research about *theatre of cruelty*, elaborates on Artaud's techniques and offers a possible interpretation: *"When what is presented is illustrated as a dream, allows to the public to liberate within*

²⁰Albert Bermel, *Artaud's Theatre of Cruelty* (London: Methuen, 2001): 6.

²¹Ibid., 15.

itself the magical liberties of dreams which it can only recognize when they are imprinted with terror and cruelty”²². Hans- Thies Lehmann continues to state that the theatre of “Dream thoughts” possesses a post- dramatic characteristic “Dream thoughts” form a texture that resembles collage, montage and fragment rather than a logically structured course of events. Artaud had already envisioned it, speaking of hieroglyphs in order to stress the status of theatrical signs between letter and image, between the respectively different modes of signifying and affecting²³. The symbolisms of the theatrical signs are fragmented and without a linear structure so as to create individual interpretations from the spectators, intriguing their subconscious and having the effect of dreams. These dream-like performances are created by LFdB from a state of non-acting, non-continuous plot structure, repeatedly expressive scenes combined with a ritualistic and energetic form.

La Fura dels Baus do not create theatre to represent a situation or fact but in their performances they present theatrical elements that have the ultimate aim to influence the spectator. Their theatre is mostly energetic theatre, a theatre of forces and intensities. Energetic theatre is theatre beyond representation but with unexpected meanings, because of the non-logical series of images²⁴. LFdB just like Artaud, search for a theatre able to integrate sensorial experiences, rather than dissolve rational meaning.

Antonio Sanchez, in his article about the Spanish company and their relation with Artaud’s theatre, describes how LFdB’s dramaturgy refers to Artaud’s theatre:

“Artaud proposed in his Theatre of Cruelty an “aesthetic language” able to displace the modern concept of the human subject by focusing instead on the human body and its experiences. In terms of theatre, this language would emphasize the physical and plastic elements rather than the characters psychology, plot and meaning. Accordingly, these typical features of representational theater are replaced in LFdB productions by fast unexpected violent acts during which the audience its denied both space and time to develop a rational explanation of the actions relentlessly performed

²² Bermel, *Artaud’s Theatre*, 94.

²³ Lehmann, *Postdramatic theatre*, 84.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 38.

around them, overwhelming their senses with: a theatre where violent physical images pulverize, mesmerize the audience's sensibilities, caught in the drama as if in a vortex of higher forces"²⁵.

The difference between Artaud's theatre and LFdB is that *theatre of cruelty* had a more ritualistic character in materializing these visceral experiences with a spiritual and personal search of the audiences through the performers whereas LFdB give more emphasis on the physical and material quality of the "here- and now"²⁶ with their violent acts and sudden movements that 'chase' the audience in the theatrical space.

However, for La Fura dels Baus, like Artaud, the performer's body has an important role and significance in a performance. The body becomes the centre of attention by its physicality and gesticulation. Artaud envisioned and created imaginative surrealistic movement through exploring the state of mind belonging to the semi-conscious realm where the suggestions of gestures are expressed more adequately²⁷. The theatre of LFdB follows and aims at the public exhibition of the body and its deterioration in an act that does not allow a clear separation of art from reality and presents performers which are characterized by inhumanity.

In the next part of this chapter I will separate the comparison/connection of Artaud's *theatre of cruelty* with LFdB, in three sections, aiming to go deeper in mapping out their similarities in their use of dramaturgical strategies. However, this will not be an extended analysis as the three points of attention will be elaborated more in the last chapter on how the specific parts play their role in creating the effect of shock. Artaud and LFdB both share the same ideas on how theatre is about constructing and exploring experiences rather than repeating realities.

²⁵ Sanchez, "La Fura dels Baus," 412.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Artaud, trans., Richards, 53.

❖ Position in space

Space for both creators plays a significant role as it manipulates the experience of the audience and determines the atmosphere of each performance. The company's *frican language* also contains a significant use of space. LFdB are known for their unusual choice of spaces for their performances. Besides the non- theatrical stage that separates their style from conventional theatre, space has another role as it actuates the psychology of the spectator and the course of the performance itself. The audience of LFdB is left free to wander through an unfamiliar space where there is no division between stage and audience, forcing the spectator to interact with the performers to experience a theatrical reality that initially lacks rational understanding.

Antonin Artaud also favored for non- theatrical spaces as he believed that the role of space had a direct relationship with one's senses. Artaud in his first manifesto²⁸, wanted to abandon the architecture of theatres with the common stage and auditorium. Instead, he chose a single space where action would take place, mingling the performers with the spectators. The audience would experience direct contact with the spectacle by being positioned at the centre of the action. Artaud wanted grand spaces with special interior dimensions of height and depth similar to those chosen by LFdB. This technique would give a special performative effect. It also required special lighting that would give the performance acts a great and sacred effect. Also the depth would alter the natural sounds of the spectacle, for example, a walk or a whisper could be manipulated and given more depth or continuity. The lack of a stage would permit the action to extend into the whole theatrical space giving a sense of exposure to the audience as it moves around the space according to the action that takes place.

Artaud's staging, like LFdB, gave a symbolic meaning to all the theatrical elements that signified the final interpretations of the performances. Sanchez quotes from "*Literary Avant-garde*" to indicate this symbolism of the space: "*The physical space of the stage began to be seen not merely as a familiar location in which dramatic business is carried out, but as a semiotic space, an expressive part of the overall*

²⁸ Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*, trans., Victor Corti (Great Britain: Oneworld Classics, 2010): 68.

symbolic structure”²⁹. Thus, space itself was given a symbolic importance that in combination with the other theatrical elements led to the final aesthesis of this kind of performances. In the last chapter I will focus more on how the space manipulates the audience’s senses because of the non- division of stage and auditorium. This effect prevents the audience from having the necessary time and space to attempt a logical explanation.

❖ **The role of violence**

Artaud wished to release a powerful energy which builds up because of repressed impulses held by the restraining structures and rules of society. Sigmund Freud noted that violent human impulses lose strength in consciousness and that recognition brings under better control the undercharged energy, which creates havoc and misery³⁰. Artaud wished to reduce real life violence through theatrical violence. This was the catharsis he desired in his performances in order to transform the audience and purify them through violent images.

Artaud theorized that symbolic gestures could provide a key to remind audiences of memories and that would be a first step in curing the psyche and preventing anyone to act out of impulse. Actors perform gestures and actions conveying such violence, cruelty and pain that they would rouse shocking images in the audiences’ minds. Through this violent experience, the audience would get to know all perverse possibilities of the mind of an individual or group of people. The violent action on stage helps the audience to solve problems outside the theatre as all the darkness and cruelty is presented in front of them³¹. Artaud wished not only to entice the minds or senses of the audience but also their entire existence.

The most essential characteristic of *furan language* is its violent character. The company chooses cruel theater vocabulary, which puts the spectator in a difficult

²⁹ Sanchez, “La Fura dels Baus,” 66.

³⁰ Mark R. Verlin, *The actor and his double: Antonin Artaud’s theory and practice of movement*, no.12 (Diss., Abstracts International: June 1983): 60-63

³¹Artaud., trans., Richards, 84-88.

position in the chaotic and shocking system of each performance. Francois Pluchart points out that staging risk and suffering is associated with the history of Western art. From the beginning of the 1970's artists have endangered their bodies and inflicted on themselves violent physical suffering in order to produce thought³². Since, the 1970's was a time of socially progressive values and political awareness, artworks opposed social concerns of violent nature to make certain points and express convictions.

The furan language performances include violent moving images, for example performers bleeding or performers running towards the audience. Their performance on stage is forceful and violent, surrounding and placing the spectators in the 'danger zone' sharing with them the possibilities of injury, and evoking in them intense emotions of fear and shock. The company with the use of violence aims to transform the audience into non- passive spectators through participating with its re- actions and having a different perspective each time. With this strategy LFdB create spectacles that affect the spectator physically and mentally. What is more is that in art the impact of violence has the importance to warn us of its presence³³. The audience participates in the act of violence without suffering its evil consequences. In this way, art and specifically the theatre of LFdB has the potential to have the same cathartic influence on audiences as Artaud's *theatre of cruelty*.

Staging this violence all the unconscious is set free and the imaginary world of the spectators is in a process to accept the theatrical world. Thus, the spectator immerses him/herself more deeply into the spectacle as he/she tries to be protected from the shock effect, the consciousness tries to filter what is presented and in that process of development his/her mind is devoted to the show.

³² Pinheiro Villar de Queiroz , *Artistic Interdisciplinarity*, 276-279.

³³ Ibid.

❖ Stimulation of senses

“...this naked theatre language, a non- virtual but real language using man’s nervous magnetism, must allow us to transgress the ordinary limits of art and words actively – that is to say magically- to produce a kind of total creation in real terms, where man must reassume his position between dreams and events”³⁴.

Antonin Artaud is known for his desire to create a total theatre, a combination of theatrical elements that would create a whole spectacle, which would influence the audiences with its dramaturgy. Thus, the theatrical elements used to create a performance have to be chosen so as to have a direct impact on the audience and to complete the final result. Artaud noted a series of this special manipulation of the elements to stimulate the senses of each spectator. In Artaud’s theatre these would require the use of technical instruments such as masks, costumes, objects combined with a variety of different styles of movement that are reminiscent of puppets or animals with mechanical gestures.

Therefore, Artaud’s first point of attention was the art of acting. He wanted the full involvement of the actor’s mind and body, which he considered the ultimate purpose of theatre. While the actors were disciplined and stylized, they would at the same time come into contact with their deeper feelings, transmitting themselves in a metaphysical plane while acting. According to Artaud, the emotions of the actors should be externalized through the body and voice, and this expression would come from the disciplined mind of the actor. As he described, the acts of the performer occur from the rehearsals and improvisations that fix the final sensation of each act³⁵. Artaud challenged the actors to portray animal characters with the capacity to move beyond their natural limitations. Actors would expose their feelings and thoughts instead of the theatrical text. Hence, what was important for Artaud was a primary experience based on the senses rather than being dependent on language or script.

In addition, to this effort to create a theatre that would speak to the minds and bodies of the audience, Artaud used a series of theatrical elements that gave a continuity of

³⁴ Artaud, trans., Corti, 65.

³⁵ Ibid., 66-70.

signs in his work. Costumes for Artaud had the special purpose of giving each actor a double body. Costumes did not present a realistic image but functioned to present an image close to tradition and rituality. Furthermore, as in ritual arts the stage was not decorated realistically but was filled with symbolic objects (enormous masks, objects of strange proportion). These objects had the power to enforce the concrete aspect of every image and every expression giving the same effect as verbal images. Also music and sound had a significant role in the *theatre of cruelty*, as musical instruments were part of the set and part of the theatrical language. This language, would work hypnotically on the senses while the actors had stylized movement and were accompanied by extraordinary sounds of music, shouts and groans. What is more, the use of light in *theatre of cruelty* evoked additional emotions. According to Artaud, light had a particular action upon the mind and could be used as an actual language on stage. Light was used with the purpose of disorientating the spectator and to dematerialize stage action.

LFdB also manipulate the theatrical elements to stimulate the senses. The stimulation develops through the actions of the performers. Other aspects of theatre are also being utilized such as: lighting, scenery, sound, music, costumes. These aspects function with the same objective as Artaud's *theatre of cruelty*. The main impact of their theatre is composed by the movement of the bodies of the *fureros* which renew different sensations for both spectators and performers³⁶. LFdB performances are not based on script but instead their performances are a result of an empirical process. The aesthetic functions of linear narrative are replaced by other aesthetic elements and practices, as architecture, music, painting and sculpture, implementing the total theatre of Artaud. LFdB's productions refer to a dream world but in a different way to Artaud. The company chooses to emphasize on the "here- and- now" without any reference to reality itself. However, they support a return to a theatre of subjective and sensorial experience created through rituals of cruelty and catharsis³⁷, which activates continuity between body and mind, intellect and senses.

³⁶ Pinheiro Villar de Queiroz , *Artistic Interdisciplinarity*, 272.

³⁷ Schez, "La Fura dels Baus," 410.

In order to elaborate further on the techniques of La Fura dels Baus, I will come back to these three dramaturgical strategies, viewing them from a different perspective, focusing on how these strategies produce a shock effect in the audience. *Position in space*, *Role of violence*, *Stimulation of senses* will be analyzed through the study of three case studies and in different theoretical framework which will reveal the visceral experience of the audience in LFdB performances; through mainly “synaesthesia”, Eisenstein’s “attraction” and Freud’s theory of the “uncanny”.

CHAPTER II

II.I SPECTATORSHIP

Vision always takes place by creating a relationship between the one viewing and what is being viewed. What is presented to be seen is adapted by the viewer through his own experiences, fantasies and dreams and often changes form in the viewer's subconscious. According to Maaïke Bleeker, in *Visuality in the theatre, the locus of looking*, in performances we have the notion of *internal and external focalization*. She presents an alternative approach, creating a model that accounts for the interaction between what is seen and seer. The aesthetic strategies of the spectator are based on his individual absorption, the cultural and historical background. Focalization has the perspective of what is seen, perceived and taught to be perceived.

“Focalization draws attention to the position which things and events are seen and also how this subjective position mediates the vision presented to us. Focalization helps to clarify how such subjective positions implied within address presented to us by, for example, a theatre performance, invite us to take up these positions, identifying with the point of view they present us with... The spectator is invited to “step inside” and to take up a position as represented within the work and to see as if from there”³⁸.

Thus within a performance the function of verbal, visual signs and the movement of the bodies through the theatrical space, speak to the spectator who, while being manipulated by the theatrical signs, expands at the same time the interpretations based on his individuality. However, because LFdB address a mass audience, their spectacles have the factor of mass impacts. As it will be analyzed, while LFdB address the masses, the psychology of the spectator is affected by the rest of the audience which creates another dynamic. Also, the use of space, violence, and the manipulation of theatrical elements have as an aim to provoke shock as a first response to the audience. Hence, the company leads its audiences to dive into the spectacle, use all their senses and have a visceral experience.

³⁸Maaïke Bleeker, *Visuality in the Theatre: The Locus of Looking* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008):27.

II.II SHOCK DEFINITION

Before analyzing how the shock effect occurs in the performances of La Fura dels Baus, it is necessary to define 'shock' and what it creates. The definition of the word 'shock' is "a sudden upsetting or surprising event or experience"; in the middle of the 16th century the definition was "an encounter between charging forces" or a "sudden violent blow or impact"³⁹. The shock effect is produced by the overstimulation of the nerves; the body takes in too much information, usually through images, which have a direct emotional and physical impact.

In addition, Benjamin Walter characterizes shock and its effect and associates it with experience. He analyzed the passage of time and how individuals claim to notice only the unexpected that takes them out of the everyday rhythm⁴⁰. Besides these unexpected 'events' that break time's continuity, humans relate to these events with experience:

*"Experience is whatever we cannot immediately either assimilate or repulse, whatever imposes itself as if foreign substance, forcing alternation or adjustment of existing psychic and somatic mechanisms. Instead of confirming habits, 'true' experience leaves a singular impression, seeming to assert originality and to deny what has always been. Mind and body together receive a jolt neither expected nor predictable"*⁴¹.

According to Benjamin this experience can only be negative because our psychic life could only be 'touched' or affected by being 'struck' or hit⁴². This negative experience is what remains in the human mind while it emerges into consciousness. The discontinuity of time is what causes the shock effect. Whilst a negative experience provides a certain measure of shock, it does not mean that a particular

³⁹ "Oxford English Dictionary online", (2nd ed.1989), 15 February 2006, accessed February 20, 2012. <http://dictionary.oed.com>

⁴⁰ Richard Shiff, "Handling Shocks: On the Representation of Experience in Walter Benjamin's Analogies", *Oxford Art Journal*, Vol. 15. No.2 (n.d 1992): 90

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

shock experience cannot be repeated. Certain kinds of experience, despite transition, repetition or a display of resemblance, produce no effect beyond shock; a sudden break or change of time's continuity.

Moreover, in *The work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (Illuminations)*, Benjamin connects shock with modernity. The experience of modernity had administered a shock to the imagination from which it has yet to recover. One effect of shock is to attenuate the power of the image, making experience hard to communicate⁴³. Benjamin believed that the world is continuously developing and society is conditioning its consciousness to always be on the alert for shocks as people are exposed to sudden changes in their environment. These sudden changes are the cause of shock in the audience of La Fura dels Baus as the spectator tries to associate the performer's violent acts with his consciousness which is interrupted by their constant and sudden change. By presenting a violent image of either a performer being hurt by another or performers on vehicles running aggressively towards the audience, the spectators need time to perceive and accept what is being presented. As this image involves sudden changes and moves violently towards the audience, it cannot protect itself consciously and so the images grow directly in the subconscious of the audience to create a real effect. Benjamin's theory explains that, by having a series of images that move and change, the audience is not given time to react to those images. Shock is allowed to penetrate the audience's barrier of consciousness and thus the audience is unable to protect itself.

Walter Benjamin's essay *The work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* commented on the political potential of the mediated cultural experience. It was written in a period of political polarization in the 1930's (Communism and Fascism) and Fascist expansionism (the Italian Invasion of Abyssinia and the German intervention in the Spanish Civil War). Suzan Buck- Morss in her essay on Benjamin reconsidered his work in relation to today's modern world (1992), "*a period where politics as spectacle has become a commonplace in our televisual world*⁴⁴". According to Benjamin the technological environment exposes the human senses to

⁴³ Abbas, "On Fascination," 44.

⁴⁴ Suzan Buck- Morss, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered", *October*, Vol. 62 (autumn 1992): 4.

physical shocks and the system passes through a stage where it tries to defend itself from those shocks and blocks human capacity to respond. Buck- Morss also illustrates in her essay how society has passed through a period of “anaesthetics” where intentional methods manipulate the synaesthetic system (hypnosis, drugs, electric shock). What is more, she explains how one can turn this reality into a phantasmagoria and, rather than being caught up in the crowd, one can make a pattern of his own and sees the crowd as a reflection, as Benjamin had analyzed, by taking distance away from the senses in order not to experiencing shock.

Nevertheless, Walter Benjamin’s theory is timeless and can be applied to our current period as it contributes to the continual art- historical reassessment of the art work and its roles in contemporary media - dominated societies. Despite the continuous development of technology and the familiarity of sudden changes, humans are still bombarded by shocks. The mediated culture of the 21st century offers society endless information concerning political and cultural issues on a global level. This results in an inability to digest the overload of new events because the conscious is not ready to accept them, and most importantly, it usually does not have the possibility of choosing which information it will receive because of this media development. Furthermore, the European economic crisis (2008), the conflict in the Middle East, the corruption of the political system and environmental issues have lead to global instability due to the delirium of continuous changes and the lack of time for society to react and adjust. “Anaesthetics” to protect one’s unconscious are an unlikely possibility because this critical global situation is part of an ever-increasing cycle and the manipulated information society receives penetrates the system’s protective shield through its consciousness. Hence, despite the difference between Walter Benjamin’s era and our current one: *“perceptions that once occasioned conscious reflection are now the source of shock impulses that consciousness must parry⁴⁵”*.

La Fura dels Baus performances attempt to increase the shock effect in their own ‘small’ society, its audiences. Even though they do not characterize their work as political, the signals they send for interpretation always make a critical comment on

⁴⁵ Buck- Morss, “Aesthetics,” 16

current events. The company breaks the audience's passivity by offering a spectacle where every theatrical element has been planned to give a visceral experience and shock the viewer. It seems that one of the purposes of their performances is not so much to produce political thought but more to produce views on how audiences can be manipulated and how this is a reflection of the manipulation of society as a whole.

Furthermore, La Fura dels Baus emphasize on the human body movement in their performances as the primary force of signification and also on its limitations as this body utilizes the possibilities of the design and space. The manner in which the company manipulates this body in space is violent and revealing. It produces a disturbing response in the audience while challenging the spectators through the stimulation of their senses. What actually happens to the audience in the performances of La Fura dels Baus is a sensory experience through the notion of "synaesthesia".

"Synaesthesia" is defined as the production of sensations to the body resulting from a stimulus applied to, or perceived by, another body⁴⁶. In simple terms "synaesthesia" defines circumstances that cannot be defined by words but by direct stimulation of the senses according to what the spectator experiences. Hence, the presentation of a naked injured or suffering body to a mass audience makes the body of the audience perceive this pain as its own. This effect depends on "kinesthetic empathy" where a performer's movement has as an impact an embodied response on the spectator. The effect is transmitted from the performer's body to the spectator's and can produce a shock which induces reflexivity⁴⁷. This effect can change the modes of the spectator's perceptions and creates an impact on the senses through the body.

La Fura dels Baus choose to give a preference to sensation rather than words. In this way they aim to focus on the audience through what it experiences in the theatrical space and focus on the audience's affection by shock.

⁴⁶Josephine Machon, *(Syn) aesthetics: Redefining Visceral Performance* (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009): 13.

⁴⁷ Dee Reynolds, and Matthew Reason, eds. *Kinesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices*. (Bristol: Intellect Ltd, 2012): 88.

II.III THE IMPORTANCE OF MASS AUDIENCE

The fact that the performances of La Fura dels Baus address a mass audience, gives another perception to their staging. Individuals are members of the crowd, but once they become crowd members, they lose their autonomy and rationality. The crowd, according to this logic turns into an animalistic subject⁴⁸ by having a will of its own and reducing individuals to pure bodily movements and affects. In order to research the notion of mass audience in La Fura dels Baus, it is necessary to examine the theories of “crowd psychology”.

Paradoxically, crowd theory, which had started as an apprehensive and reactionary critique of antisocial phenomena, such as violent riots, developed out of unstable self-organizing social processes in the late 19th century. Crowds were considered to be highly volatile and dangerous social collectivities in the interwar era⁴⁹ (1919- 1939), which posed a threat not only to traditional social structures but also to traditional social attitudes. Thus, simultaneously with the invention of the crowd, crowds are considered to be something to be controlled⁵⁰. The crowd members are susceptible to persuasion by image and emotion, and are antithetical to reason, dialogue and individuality and hence, they become a subject of great interest to politicians and performance theorists during the interwar period.

The theory of “crowd psychology” by Gustave Le Bon, explains the definition of the word crowd. The definition of crowd is a gathering of individuals of whatever nationality, sex or circumstances that has been brought together. What is more is that the crowd has the special characteristic to develop new ideas and sentiments that usually take the same direction, while their conscious personalities vanish. Le Bon believed that what moves the crowd is the unconscious and this unconsciousness acts like an unknown force, since it plays a part in all of our actions while reason sometimes is absent from our actions. Le Bon stated that

⁴⁸ Urs Staheli, “Seducing the crowd: The leader in Crowd psychology”, trans., Eric Savoth, *New German Critique*, Vol. 38, no.114 (fall 2011): 64.

⁴⁹ Kimberly Jannarone, “Audience, Mass, Crowd Theatres of Cruelty in Interwar Europe”, *Theatre Journal*, Vol. 61, no.2 (May 2009):207.

⁵⁰ Staheli, “Seducing the crowd,” 63- 64.

once individuals become crowd members, they become destructive as they are ruled by their animalistic and primitive instincts⁵¹. Thus, in the performances of LFdB the chaotic atmosphere that the company produces, together with the violent acts, absorbs the audience's attention and manipulates their mental and physical state, which places the audience in the cruel mood of the spectacle. According to Gustave Le Bon in *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind*⁵², the manipulation of the crowd takes place with three central communicative techniques:

- Affirmation: Slogan, images, metaphors
- Repetition
- Contagion

Le Bon tried to describe the force and nature of crowds and he pointed out how a crowd's psychology can vary according to race, social characteristics and the nature and intensity of the causes to which the crowd is subjected. Nevertheless, despite the origin, character or intelligence of the individuals, when they are part of a crowd they become one collective mind which feels, thinks and acts differently. This thesis evaluates how the mass audience's perception is controlled by what is being presented through the manipulation of its unconscious. While the performances of LFdB create a shock effect, as will be assessed in the next chapter, the importance of addressing a mass audience supports the effect of shock and makes it more drastic in its perception.

The first characteristic of crowds, according to Le Bon, is that individuals in a crowd act differently. As he exemplified, in a crowd every sentiment and act is contagious to such degree that an individual readily sacrifices his personal interest. As part of a group, individuals lose their identity and yield to their instincts. Consequently, the sentiment of responsibility which always controls individuals is left behind, and the individual acts under the energy of the rest of the crowd and accordingly to the 'leader's'/ 'maker's' aims. Thus, the audience has the

⁵¹ Le Bon, *The Crowd*, 10.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 72.

possibility to act freely without any restrictions either social or personal, as in that specific moment the individual is just a member of a herd.

Secondly, crowds are characterized by a contagious force that manipulates them into acting and perceiving something the same. Contagion is a phenomenon which is easy to establish but it is hard to explain. Le Bon calls it a phenomenon of a hypnotic order: in a crowd every sentiment and act is contagious and contagious to such degree that an individual readily sacrifices his personal interest to the collective interest⁵³. The individual is influenced by the magnetic force of the crowd or by the fascination in which he/she surrenders to the hypnotizer. Thus, the person becomes enslaved by his/her unconscious and can be directed by whomever wishes to manipulate him/her, leaving the person to be impressed by worlds and images. Le Bon states other characteristics of the crowd, such as impulsiveness, irritability, incapacity to reason, the absence of judgment and critical spirit as also the exaggeration of the sentiments.

A crowd thinks in images and these images conjure up other images in the individual's mind which are independent but can usually have a distant relation with the observed fact. However, the observed facts, whose effect is chosen by the company, cause a reaction in the individual that determines the mass reaction through the process of contagion.

An event depends on the dynamics of the crowd, so the relationship between the audience and performers is an exchange of mutual energy. Le Bon states that an orator wishing to move a crowd must make an abusive use of violent affirmation. In order to attack the spectator's sensibility, LFdB creates a spectacle which offers visual and sonorous outbursts to the whole of the audience that experiences sudden and intense shocks. Through exaggeration, affirmation and resorting to repetitions⁵⁴ the isolated individuals relinquish their individuality on becoming members of a crowd and transform into a homogeneous unit which acts according to its senses.

⁵³ Le Bon, *The Crowd*, 17- 18.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

Furthermore, pure and simple affirmations put ideas in the mind of the crowd. They utilize short, sharp messages that work on the consciousness of the crowd. However, affirmations are powerless if they are not repeated. The thing affirmed comes by repetition to fix itself in the mind in such a way that it is accepted in the end as a demonstrated truth⁵⁵. Furthermore, ideas, sentiments, emotion and beliefs possess a contagious intense power in crowds. In this way the power of contagion can reinforce in individuals not only opinions but certain modes of feeling if they are correctly propagated by the manipulator.

La Fura dels Baus more specifically astonish the mass audience with the use of mythologized characters and plot; the visceral assault on the performer's bodies and the spectator's senses with the elevation of image over text and feeling over reason. The manipulation of the audience through myths is based on Antonin Artaud's dramatic foundation. The mythic characters present their passions but they will be taken as the emanation of forces and can be understood through their historical fatality⁵⁶. The characters of myths represent the crowd and non-dramatic figures and are conceived by the audience as heroic or tragic. The performers' behavior, especially after their inhuman acts, gives a direct emotional release from negative emotions; a higher catharsis as Aristotle exemplified in Greek tragedy.

Moreover, the repetition of images of the performer's cruel acts forces the audience to pay attention to specific images that have a meaning. The audience perceives the presented messages and negative emotions which are usually hidden in the unconscious, and thereby the audience experiences both physical and emotional change. The audience is shocked as it did not experience a process of preparation.

“Crammed in by one another and the production, members of the crowd will surrender their individual autonomy and give themselves over to the

⁵⁵ Le Bon, *The Crowd*, 72.

⁵⁶ Jannarone, “Audience, Mass, Crowd,” 203.

event...Physical over power leads to complete submission: body, intellect, and self lose their autonomy and merge with the spectacle.”⁵⁷

What is important in these observations is that there is a contagious power in crowds because of the bodies' energy. This energy works on visceral rather than an intellectual level. La Fura dels Baus use dramaturgical strategies to seduce the spectators, through the presentation of cruel images or the stimulation of their senses, and manipulates the audience into feeling the direct effect of shock.

Hence, the importance of the company in addressing a mass audience helps to deliver their messages not only by creating an interaction between the performers and audience but also by creating an emotional interaction between the mass audiences. The images spread contagiously from the individuals to the mass audience whose reactions are obvious both physically and emotionally. The company manipulates the audience and aims for the surrender of its individuality to the ecstatic atmosphere of the crowd whose main emotion is shock.

⁵⁷Jannarone, "Audience, Mass, Crowd," 207.

III. CASE STUDIES

SHOCK EFFECT

La Fura dels Baus's performances look like an experiment whose results are accurate as the company has calculated the outcome. Each representation is an aggressive act against the spectator's apathy with the aim of changing the usual relationship between the spectator and the spectacle and has a strong impact on the audience through shock. Hence, this chapter will illustrate how the shock effect occurs in the company's performances. Since shock can be created through different elements, LFdB chose to demonstrate it through three different aspects, which are the same as Artaud's in a previous chapter: Position in Space/ / Role of Violence/ Stimulation of Senses.

III.I. POSITION IN SPACE - *SUZ/O/SUZ*

An important factor in producing the shock effect is space. Space in La Fura dels Baus offers a multi-dimensional experience to the audience as it produces or adds different layers of meaning that the audience absorbs and interprets. What is more important than the role of space as interpretation is the audience's position within that space. Since the audience is not positioned in the conventional way (staged performances), the audience moves as the performers guide it and is exposed to the performance that takes place.

In *synaesthetic* spaces the architectural impact of site makes the audience aware of the quality of spatial presence and their position within that⁵⁸. The audience in these spaces is often required to become an affective element within the design itself. Furthermore, the design elements become vital experiential aspects of such performances, which offer simultaneously both a physical and mental realm. La Fura dels Baus, with the combination of space, sound and body, aim to give a sensual experience to the audience, which will interpret, each of those elements while at the same time absorbing the performance as a whole and total spectacle.

⁵⁸ Machon, (*Syn*) *aesthetics*, 57.

In their first trilogy, of *Accions- Suz/o/Suz- Tier Mon*, LFdB used space to add meanings and senses to the interpretation of their performances. The chosen performance as a case study, *Suz/o/Suz* has a more ritualistic character that is reminiscent of Artaud's work. In addition, the manipulation of space itself has a lot of functions in the final aesthesis of the performance. *Suz/o/Suz* (1985), investigates the idea of primordial man who plays, discovers, creates myth and tries to create language. *Suz/o/Suz* was performed in an old funerary in Madrid, which smelt strongly the remains of animal's ribs that filled the air⁵⁹. Firstly, an overall description of the performance will be outlined in order to help the elaboration of how the effect of shock occurs within the space. In the sections that refer to space utilization, an explanation will be given on how the company manipulates the audience through their position in the theatrical space.

The performance starts with the audience entering a huge dark space, with no visible actors or stage. Instead, there are two scaffolding towers symmetrically distant from each other. The triangular laterals of one tower and the rectangular shape of the other tower signify the idea of two tribes. These towers transform themselves according to each scene and its needs. Their basic function is to act as platforms where the lead actors display their power and dominance as they are at a higher level than the rest of the performers. The towers look like basic wooden constructions but they are also visible backstage, temporary stages, if a raised platform is required, and storage space. They contain firm stages, appliances for suspension and flight, props and smoke machines. What is of particular significance is the towers' enormous size and their ability to move and change form according to each scene. Also, the tower's mobility is used to 'chase' the audience through the space during the battle scenes between the performers (two tribes). These two constructions create an uncomfortable feeling in the audience as their sudden change of form and position confuse the spectators and often traps them into the actions. Just by experiencing space itself and its atmosphere, the audience feels uncomfortable and anxious as to what it will face in this complete darkness.

Under a low yellow light, eight performers swing down from various ropes to the ground with movements that refer to animalistic or inhuman behavior. The performers

⁵⁹ . Pinheiro Villar de Queiroz , *Artistic Interdisciplinarity*, 204.

after landing start interacting with the audience. They move towards the audience in a state of ecstatic dance using supermarket trolleys, working motors, drums, and a butane gas canister. The trolleys pushed by the performers run towards the spectators that are literally running to save themselves. A performer, who is holding the gas canister with a rope, swings it up in the air towards the audience which moves to avoid being injured.

What refers to a theatrical space is a small stage at the back where abandoned musical instruments of a rock band have been randomly placed. During the performance the audience experience sudden changes of concept. Swiftly the space is transformed into a rock concert, where what initially reminds the audience of a rock song is an attempt of the performer to connect phonemes and create language. Hence, whilst the scenery changes from the first primitive dance to a rock concert, it then continues with a quick change to a primitive call from the “singer”. As his “speech” continues, it becomes more and more aggressive which immediately puts his followers into an ecstatic mood. The performers are not only acting violently among themselves but also towards the audience.

This series of images that change rapidly and cause a shocking experience is related to Sergei Eisenstein’s theory in *Montage of Attractions*. Eisenstein implicates a direct, aggressive address to the spectator that goes beyond or even against the taste of the audience, causing an emotional shock⁶⁰.

“An attraction is any aggressive moment in theatre any element of it that subjects the audience to emotional or psychological influence, verified by experience and mathematically calculated to produce specific emotional shocks on the spectator. These shocks provide the only opportunity of perceiving the ideological aspect of what is being shown, the final ideological conclusion”⁶¹.

In the case of this performance, shock is created by the presentation of primordial man with his primitive behavior and savagery. “Attractions” are considered to form the

⁶⁰ Sergei Eisenstein, *Montage of attraction: The film sense*, trans., Jey Leyda (New York: Hartcourt, 1975): 18.

⁶¹Richard Taylor, *Eisenstein Reader* (London: British Film Institute (BFI), 1998): 30.

structure of the show. La Fura dels Baus select each angle of vision with accuracy when positioning the audience in the theatrical space, reinforcing what it is presented into an “attraction”.

In a following scene, two of the performers that have leading roles appear among the audience on trolleys being pushed by two other performers. The men start eating raw entrails and drinking blood. Then they start a fight using flour bombs and bathe themselves in blood. The audience is surrounded by, while at the same time it is surrounding, this battle with the result not only to experience deeply what has taken place but even to physically have the marks of the blood, flour and the leftovers of the raw entrails that the performers were spitting on them. The intensity of this scene, as in the rest performance, lies in the fact that it is a *live* performance that has an immediate interactive exchange of energy and feelings. The presence of the audience in *live* performances creates a sensory experience through this immediate witnessing⁶². The audience engages itself with what is taking place and surrenders all the senses to be manipulated by the show.

As the performance had sudden changes of scenery, it also had a sudden darkening of the space and vice versa, which played a role in the appearance of the space itself. Through this concept, two transparent swimming pools are lit up in the dark space. Inside two naked acolytes are submerged while they are manipulated and extracted from their containers by their “masters” (the two leading performers). This scene creates a claustrophobic feeling in the audience because, apart from the image of the two men closed in the small swimming pools (boxes), the space is only lit around the pools and therefore, the audience is trapped into watching the cruel scene that ensued. The acolytes have the form of naked embryos curled up in a small space. The two performers begin to have interaction with the ‘embryos’ by displaying tenderness. Then suddenly the ‘embryos’ become hunting prey and the two performers kill their prey with spears. Their death is slow and painful but the audience is still trapped in the same spot close to the light. The audience has a visceral experience while all its senses are called into action and it accepts the form of the performance as a semiotic

⁶² Machon, *(Syn) aesthetics*, 25.

site that creates a direct communication, as the signs and elements of the space add interpretations⁶³.

A delirious dance followed this scene with the performers throwing liquids among the audience using buckets, trolleys and moving bath tubs. The space widened as the light brightened and revealed all the space's dimensions but the audience was still being physically attacked by the performers.

What followed as an example of the changes in the utilized space is a ritual of initiation with the bodies of the acolytes. In this instance the towers are a form of sanctuary and have ropes that the two performers are hanging from. The acolytes try to avoid the fire, the smoke and the pain inflicted on them by the two other performers.

This scene illustrates how LFdB use mobile sets, as the towers, to transform and create different concepts. The towers, together with the other settings, were placed in a symmetrical or central disposition inside the space and combined with their mobility added a ritual content to the performance. Actions were created through the space and through the setting itself. The design of the space and the body onto that design had direct consequences on the performer and audience. The performers seemed to be "in danger" from the design and the audience experienced this danger in an active way.

The space in the performances of LFdB is a synaesthetic hybrid, which plays its individual role in the stimulation of the audience's senses. As a synaesthetic space it demands much from its audience. The audience is expected to experience and interpret a whole stage that interweaves live performers with design elements. Each of them creates a different impact on the audience. When the audience is encouraged to experience the various signs in the performance, it becomes a part of the lucid piece. The inquisitiveness penetrates the content and activates a multifaceted journey of interpretation for each individual spectator⁶⁴.

The transformations of space and consequently the repositioning of the spectators in the space did not allow the time for reactions to all the different images presented to

⁶³ Machon, *(Syn) aesthetics*, 60.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 61.

the audience. Nonetheless the audience's consciousness could not work as a filter to protect it or stop the effect of shock. As Eisenstein's theory *Montage of Attractions*, the company targets an audience that experiences surprising events in a violent way. This experience involves surprise, discontinuity and rapidity which ultimately results in shock. In this notion of attraction, the spectator cannot remain passive as the surprises disturb any social or individual experience he/she once had. While the spectator is bombarded by shocking actions, the experience becomes synonymous with disruption and incoherence⁶⁵.

The audience, on confronting cruel acts in the theatrical space and moreover having these acts challenging, pushing and chasing it, is immediately shocked. By positioning the audience at the centre of the action and surrounding them with aggressive acts, the audience is bombarded and is not in a position to protect itself. Also as the performers address the viewer directly, they become an essential part of the show whose moving images stimulate the senses and emotions. The all-around show of the company had the effect of "attraction" with an interaction between several spectacle elements and different forms of representation in a space that transformed its presence but even more, transformed the audience depending on what was being presented. Additionally, the importance of space in La Fura dels Baus lies in the relationship between the performers and the design that had direct consequences on the audience leaving the marks of each scene's experience. The company draws attention to the way in which the audience experiences through shock each theatrical event.

⁶⁵ Wanda Strauven, ed., *The Cinema of Attractions: Reloaded* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006): 58.

III.II. THE ROLE OF VIOLENCE - *IMPERIUM*

The violent character of La Fura dels Baus's performances is obvious both on stage and from the viewer's perspective. The company uses violent theatrical language on stage that has a direct impact on the audience. The presentation of cruel events has also an important role in the result of shocking the audience. La Fura dels Baus uses the human body as the carrier of meaning which adds interpretations in its interaction with other theatrical or non-theatrical elements. The ways that the company utilizes the body of the performers aims to disturb and affect the physical body of the audience; the result is to influence intellectually, as the brain is affected by the body, which releases the repressed subconscious.

As a *synaesthetic* company, their performances have always been charged with strong emotions, that is also an effect of the non-conventional relationship between the performers and the audience. These emotions are reinforced by the way the physical body of the performers responds to the physical body of the audience. In the performances of La Fura dels Baus and in this case in *Imperium*, the human body of the performers goes through a lot of stages, either by doing circus acts or through suffering during the interaction with the other performers. The audience experiences an exchange of energies with the performers; this energy has a visceral impact on the spectator who is trying to accept what takes place. The body of the spectator has physical reactions from the images presented from the bodies of the performers, which stimulate the senses. In this way the audience experiences a metamorphosis through the visceral assaults on the body of the performers that produce a fused consciousness where body and mind senses conjoined through sudden shocks, which revive understanding in a total way⁶⁶.

The performance *Imperium* (2007) was premiered in Beijing. A place where a kind of 'controlled' freedom is been offered to the citizens. *Imperium* was a protest towards imperialism. Imperialism is understood by the company as a relationship between two

⁶⁶ Machon, (*Syn*) *aesthetics*, 44.

entities, individual or societies, in which one submits to the other or is annihilated⁶⁷. The piece examines the relationship between two individuals, societies, or entities that attempt to dominate, subjugate, or destroy anyone who does not march in step with their imperialistic imperatives⁶⁸. This performance was more an experience for the audience that passed through emotional, mental and physical journeys. For this piece the company chose to use only female performers, giving a more intense result to each violent scene. The female body is considered sacred because of its connection with birth. Thus, by using only women for this performance, the company directly gave another atmosphere through the piece which was sometimes more sacred and ritualistic in parts and in others more harsh and unbearable to watch. Because as a spectator, seeing a female body act violently and most importantly seeing that body to experience violence from others, has directly a shocking impact on each spectator's perspective. The spectators are not just given over to visceral states of astonishment but they are critically and physically active.

The performance starts with the audience entering a dark space in which afterwards the doors are shut, low red lights fill the room revealing several triangular platforms. A mechanical trolley brings the female performers that have brutal attitude into the space. The women are dressed in leather with "equipment" similar to warriors. While the performance starts with this severe scene, it continues with women on the platforms, wearing dresses and having a sensual interaction with the audience. Only when, what sounds as a political speech coming from another performer, does the atmosphere change rapidly. The women on the platforms are half-naked, tied on a rolling tableau and are being tortured by other performers. What prevails in this performance is its rough and violent character. Women on metal stilts are jumping around the space holding bats and trying to beat their opponents. Afterwards the performers try to destroy a wooden effigy, hitting it hard with the danger of also hitting the spectators that were standing around the show. Screaming, beating and wounding themselves the performers showed polemic images to an audience who is trying hard to avoid injuring itself.

⁶⁷ Robert Machray, "Imperium by La Fura dels Baus at Pals Sharp". Review of Imperium by La Fura dels Baus. *Stage Mage*, July 11, 2008, accessed May 25, 2012.

<http://blogcritics.org/culture/article/theater-review-milan-imperium-by-la/>

⁶⁸ Ibid.

The performance is a battle between two individuals, two parties, two societies or two tribes. Hence, the evolution of the show is a battle of dominance of the strongest. In this battle no one is a winner as at the end of the show the two women warriors fall on the ground, while another performer comes on stage to make sure they are both dead. This last scene shows how the two women (with all the symbolisms that these women carry) are manipulated by another person. The images refer to certain situations of social manipulation from political parties or people in power. In one scene the 'strongest' performer is on a moving metal machine, persuading the rest of the performers to follow while it throws rice at them. When the performers come close, the 'strongest' hits them hard, sending them away. The role of rice for feeding the rest or in some cases shoving too much rice in their mouths could have the aim to show how the powerful can mislead the weak and how baits can be given to the people but their use can have the opposite effect. This scene with its violent vocabulary sends signals of symbolism to the audience that can work into its subconscious and emerge suppressed thoughts which with the intensity of the acts, force the audience in receiving these symbolisms and leads to shock.

LFdB pay attention to how people can be manipulated; therefore, they use a video projecting through almost the whole performance. The video is an 'animation' figure that shows how information gets into the brain, is digested and then defecated and goes again into the brain or goes from defecation to nourishment for others. The video together with the violent acts of the performers and the quick changes from ritualistic to cruel acts confuses the audience. The company uses strategies as chaos and violence to create shock in the audience. Whilst it manipulates the spectator the company follows Eisenstein's "attraction" to seduce the audience and give the desired effect to the public. In the theatre of attractions, the creation of a performance entails first in finding the form that most sharply provokes the viewer's emotions. These attractions are deployed in a sequence of mounting intensity, which secures the final discharge of the viewer's emotion in the maker's preferred direction⁶⁹. Suddenly from an individual person, the spectator is a member of a mass which is manipulated by the performers and the media of a show. Hence, having all the senses alerted the spectator

⁶⁹ Sergei Tretiakov, "The Theatre of Attractions," *October*, no.118 (fall 2006): 24.

can feel, taste and extend with his imagination each cruel image that is presented in the performances of La Fura dels Baus.

Furthermore, the audience is dominated by a frightened, uncomfortable and unpleasant emotion, a feeling that can be related with the “uncanny”. Sigmund Freud defines it firstly as an emotion and secondly as an object of aesthetics. This particular form of fear derives from the return of something repressed. Hence, experiencing something that stimulates your senses in ways that bring to the surface repressed images or feelings, can lead to this “uncanny” emotion. It marks a sphere of indistinguishable ability between fantastic and real stimulation, expectable artistic effect and true surprise⁷⁰. The “uncanny” is the fear which leads back to what is known as old and familiar. The German word “unheimlich” defines the opposite of the word familiar, which proposes that the uncanny is what is *not known* and in the same time *familiar*. The “uncanny” emotion is in reality something old- established in the mind which has become alienated through the process of repression.

In *Imperium* the audience participated in a series of actions, which place it in a confused state of what is real, imaginative or planned by the company. The connection of these actions with the emotion of uncanny comes from the disturbance that they cause. Freud explains that uncanny is an effect of projecting unconscious desires and fears, thus, the uncanny is not experienced because something wholly other impacts on the subject, but instead because something already there in subjectivity seems to exist in the realm of the other, outside the subject⁷¹.

In our case the spectator is attracted by the vision of the female body because it’s something that has a relation with himself; either the spectator is female and has the same characteristics as the performers, or the spectator is male and was born by a female. By seeing the tortured female bodies of the performers, the spectators are shocked as the female body is being used violently and subsequently this

⁷⁰ Sigmund Freud, *The uncanny, Art and Literature* (Harmondsworth Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1985): 2.

⁷¹ Lib Taylor, “The Unhomely stage”, *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, Vol. 26, no.3 (2006 n.d): 208- 210.

uncomfortable feeling the “uncanny” prevails. The audience experiences in *Imperium* something that is out of its consciousness, a reality that is strange, but the subjects acted are familiar. Hence, Freud’s strangeness derives its power from its relation to unconscious thoughts which are not part of the subject’s rational and conscious awareness. The frightening nature of the uncanny is the effect of the return to the subject’s perception of thoughts which he or she does not recognize as familiar.

In *Imperium* the audience experiences a series of ritualistic scenes which through them the emotion of uncanny conquers the performance’s audience. During one scene all the women performers are standing aligned covering their bodies with mud, while they are completely naked. Under low white light their figures seem grand and powerful in contrast with the rest dark space. The movement of the performers is slow and synchronized as they are transforming their naked bodies to muddy, inhuman figures. When the bodies are completely covered with mud the rhythm of their movement becomes more rapid while they are touching themselves in a rough-harmful way; the women proceed this scene with a dance that reminds of a tribe ritual, closely related to a preparation for battle.

Through this scene the effect of the uncanny can be explained more deeply. As the performers are transforming their bodies to something inhuman and as they are preparing for a battle, the audience faces a strange ‘reality’, the female bodies are getting ready to be harmed. In contemporary reality women are not supposed or used to fight in war zones or other battles, except for some stories of women who fought defending their counties. However, the image of warrior women as the myth of the Amazons⁷², with this certain brutal behavior is unfamiliar to our current society. The audience experiences the “uncanny” from the female figures, which are acting with strange- unfamiliar movements, projecting violence and cruelty. Moreover, as the

⁷² Warrior women, who are described in the *Iliad* as "antianeirai", meaning: those who go to war like men. They were also described by Herodotus as "androktones", killers of males. It is believed they resided in Pontus, Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) but there are differing views as to how many nations of Amazons there were. The most famous came from Pontus, with Themiscyra as their capital, and it is said that it was this community who built Ephesus on the central west coast of Asia Minor (history records Ephesus as being built circa 1050 BCE. by Ionian Greeks).

William Smith, ed., *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman biography and mythology* (London: University of Michigan, 1873): 257.

uncanny effect is produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced, the unrealistic image of women preparing for war creates a direct uncomfortable feeling to the spectators, who are familiar with women in other situations. Also, the strategy of the company to place all the female performers aligned acting in the same way in this scene, forms as a repetition that emphasizes a sense of normality surrounding the “uncanny” and remarks things as significant.

Additionally, the uncanny performances become the “double”, which Artaud envisioned for theatre, a place of drastic action pushed to the limit, which arouses deep echoes within us. It disturbs, deforms and disrupts the familiar. It presents the customary as extraordinary, bizarre, and inexplicable⁷³. LFdB in this performance show the similarities of their dramaturgical strategies with Artaud. As in both theatres one cannot separate the senses from the intellect and what is performed which has as aim to call for sudden shocks which will revive the audience’s understanding. Moreover, both aim towards a theatre that reacts to our reality through illusionary images, which place the audience in a confusion of reality and dream.

The presentation of female bodies being tortured or acting as warriors, refers to mythology and efface the distinction between reality and imagination. Furthermore, the video of the performance that was described above creates a visual imagery in which the “uncanny” eruptions of memory, fantasies and dreams are potently felt. *Imperium* can work as staging the “uncanny” with the same interleaved dualities between inner and outer, self and other, reality and fantasy⁷⁴. *Imperium* is a performance that projects the emotion of uncanny and aims to reveal unsettling meanings through a combination of the performer’s acts, which resonate in the experience of each spectator and are shaped by the relationship of the spectator with the performers.

⁷³ Taylor, “The Unhomely stage,” 215.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

III.III. STIMULATION OF SENSES- *DEGUSTACION OF TITUS ANDRONICUS*

La Fura dels Baus manage in their performances to stimulate all human senses. This section of the shock effect analysis is supplementary to the others because placing the audience in a specific way, or presenting to it violence has the direct effect of the stimulation of the senses. However, the stimulation of the senses occurs also from the company's manipulation of the theatrical elements. La Fura dels Baus present a total spectacle, where the combination of sound, light, space and video installations, contribute to the final stage result.

The combination of artistic principles and techniques are manipulated in such a way so they produce a visceral response towards the body and mind of the audience. The dramaturgical strategies of the company allow a sensation through visual, physical and verbal means. La Fura dels Baus aim for an active audience, they calculate all the show's elements so while experiencing them, the experiences of the audience will change. Sensations will emerge in each image presented, whilst everything works towards the exploration of theatrical means and the effects that it can cause to the spectator.

In the performance *Degustacion de Titus Andronicus* (2010), the company seduced the spectators to be involved and interact with the spectacle itself. The specific performance is based on the theatrical play *Titus Andronicus* by William Shakespeare. The play was written between 1588 and 1593. It is considered to be Shakespeare's first tragedy, and is often seen as his attempt to emulate the violent and bloody revenge plays of his contemporaries, which were extremely popular with audiences throughout the sixteenth century. The play is set during the latter days of the Roman Empire and tells the fictional story of Titus, a general in the Roman Army, who is engaged in a cycle of revenge with Tamora, Queen of the Goths⁷⁵. LFdB chose Shakespeare's bloodiest and most violent work, and is an ideal example of how the company uses theatrical elements to cause shock towards the audience.

⁷⁵ William Shakespeare, *Titus Andronicus*, eds., Barbara A. Mowat, and Paul Werstine (New York: Washington Square Press, 2005).

In this performance LFdB use a combination of video projections, sound and light effects, while two chefs are cooking in a kitchen during the whole play and then challenge the audience to use all five of the senses to experience this performance. Towards the end of the performance twenty-eight spectators participated in the final scene of Titu's banquet, giving a more intense visceral aesthesis to the audience.

For this section of the shock effect, it was decided to analyse the performance by giving an overview of the show and focus on the stimulation of the senses. It was considered the most productive way to separate what was presented, which one of the five senses was stimulated, and how with this stimulation the shock effect occurred. Thus, a sample of the theatrical elements that the company used will be matched to the five senses and explained thoroughly by their combinations and the shock effect caused towards the audience.

Sight: *Degustacion de Titus Andronicus* offers the audience visual journeys that change the place and time of the performance. The play is set in Ancient Rome, and the company chooses to surround the audience by a video installation of Rome on each wall of the square theatrical space. In this way the company solves the matter of stage sets, transforming the scenes with the theatrical element of video accordingly to the place presented. Hence, the theatrical space transforms to Ancient Rome, to a forest, focusing on the movements of the performers where it is needed, until the scene of a battle where the video resembles a video game. LFdB by using this technique drag the audience into delirium of altered spaces and times, shocking the audience which felt uncomfortable in a space that was continuously changing.

Furthermore, by the application of video techniques the company is able to emphasize the most intense scenes. The audience is manipulated to devote itself to the cruel scenes as the video effects seduce the mass to react both mentally and physically. The mechanical reproduction of the play changes the reaction of the mass towards the play itself. The reaction of the audience is characterized by the direct, intimate fusion of visual and emotional engagement with the orientation of the expert⁷⁶.

⁷⁶ Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 227.

For example, in the last scene (5th), Titus captures Tamora's sons and hangs them upside down transforming the scene to butchery. While he tortures their bodies the two chefs are preparing a meal; the video is focusing on the movements of the two chefs in their process to cook meat. This scene is disturbing as the two images predispose what will follow, and that is the baking of a pie from the dead bodies of the sons. By focusing on the chef's movements in the video and by having Titus stabbing the prisoners on stage, the conscious of the audience could be shocked with the quick exchange of the projected images. The emotions are specifically linked to the appearance of motion which transforms the emotion into a state of shock. Montage according to Eisenstein⁷⁷, connects disparate images and creates a shock of thought. Strong emotions are created in the interstice between media and different forms of representation.

Moreover, LFdB's use of costumes and objects creates a variety of possible interpretations of the theatrical characters, which have a profound effect on the audience. Although in the case of this performance, the company uses realistic costumes that refer to ancient Rome, the costumes are suitable for the cruel scenes of the play and are at the same time mingled with the realistic (modern) suits of the chefs. The mixture of real time and the transformation into Ancient times is the main characteristic of the scenery as the performers are dressed in armors of Roman army, or the female tunic, while the chefs are dressed in their uniform and use current cooking equipment. The props, the performers use, are mostly swords and spears which refer to wartime and create a contrast with the background of the main stage with the chefs. Hence, the play's scenery and equipment helps in seducing the audience to dive into the core of the play, and at the same time confuse the logic consistency of the audience by placing the 'kitchen' stage.

The lighting plays an important role in the stimulation of the sight, as its function increases the tension of the scenes. Light as a theatrical element, comes into the performance to complete the cruel and uncomfortable atmosphere of the play, raising the occurrence of shock. The audience experiences the cruel scenes, such as the rape of Titu's daughter or the killing of Tamora's sons, with cold blue- white light while the rest of the theatrical space is completely in the dark. Furthermore, the scene of

⁷⁷ Staruven, *The Cinema of Attractions*, 49.

battle between Titus's and Tamora's crew, has the effect of circus delirium whilst the Roman atmosphere transforms into an amusement park where the performers move with small vehicles, under a 'dance' of colorful lighting. The light underlines the emotions that the company wished the audience to feel. It manipulates the gaze of the spectators giving focus on the scenes or movements that cause both the stimulation of the senses and of feelings. Thus, the lighting helps in the sudden changes of the play's environment or in some cases, such as the battle, the light functions in contrast to the acts of the performers. These functions cause a confusion that leads to a chaotic atmosphere, which alleviates the shock effect of the audience.

The performers acting techniques are of particular significance. Even though *Degustacion de Titus Andronicus* is based on Shakespeare's play, the body of the performers is the carrier of meaning which creates multi-layered interpretations. The characters are taken from the Roman Empire and have a glorious and powerful way of acting. At the same time, as the characters are taken from a fictional story, their way of performing has inhuman elements, mostly because of the series of cruel acts. The performance as an adaptation of the play *Titus Andronicus*, involves fourteen killings, six severed members, one rape, one case of insanity and cannibalism. Besides the fourteen killings, LFdB include all the rest in their performance, reducing the killings to five on stage. The violence of the play is presented 'realistically', having a direct impact to the audience. The bodies of the performers respond to the bodies of the spectators, touching nerves and provoking alarm with the violence presented. The visceral experience forces the audience to react due to the violation of consciousness by the form and the content of the performance⁷⁸. The audience experiences sudden shocks as the body and mind cannot be separated when it comes to the senses.

Hearing: *Degustacion de Titus Andronicus* is a multimedia performance which combines a field of sound (music, screams, noises, echoes, speech) and images (live and mediated) to produce a theatre piece that stimulates by all its elements the audience's senses. The performance composes speech with sound, music, noise, persuasive rhythm and theatrical sound effects, which are integrated into the performance as a primary level of theatrical signification.

⁷⁸ Machon, *(Syn) aesthetics*, 32.

What prevails in the performance is the screaming of the characters being tortured. The sound of their voices often work to guide the audience through the space (the same as the lighting), focusing on the most intense violent acts. The audience hearing the performers' screams is surrounded by the "uncanny" emotion. Again the spectator experiences the "uncanny" as the human scream is something familiar, something that can be recognized even within the spectators as individuals. However, it can cause the uncomfortable feeling of the uncanny by its strangeness as the sound of screaming is not something that is considered normal. What is more, the connection between the screaming and a shocking occurrence stimulates the unconscious of the audience to make associations that provoke an unsettling feeling; a state of shock, the "uncanny".

Also, in the battle scene the company chooses electronic sounds that join with the video projection of video game. With the contrast of the image of the Roman warriors fighting in the background of the specific sound and font, the scene has again an uncomfortable impact on the audience. This is because the battle presented does not have continuity with the elements that complete the scene and results in the effect of breaking the consistency of the viewer.

The dimension of sound which connects the audience physically to the event leads to a somatic experience, giving rise to moments of visceral shock, which can undermine the impulse for rational or cognitive interpretation.

Taste/ Smell: The rare element that the company uses to stimulate all five senses is the live presence of two chefs, which are preparing the meal of the last scene during the whole performance. The theatrical space is filled with the smell of the meal intriguing the audience's interest as the modern picture of the chefs comes in contrast with the rest of the performance. Furthermore, the image of the two chefs cooking and the zoomed video projection of their movements during the most violent scenes of the play bring to the performance intense stimulation. The company bombards the audience with images aiming for their attention and reaction while at the same time the company chooses to stir confusion from the diversity of the images.

As it has been mentioned before, in the last scene of *Degustacion de Titus Andronicus* the performers invites twenty- eight members of the audience to participate in the dinner scene. In this stage of the play, Titus invites Tamora and her lover with the

mad plan to feed them the pie which was made of her dead sons' bodies. The scene ends with a series of killings among the seated spectators. The stage design of the platform with the two chefs expands to formulate a long dining table and the members of the audience become guests and witnesses of Titus' actions. The company succeeds in making members of the audience to literally react during the performance as the participants are dining with the characters and are avoiding getting hurt at the moment of the killings. At the same time, the rest of the audience is experiencing the scene from both perspectives. Firstly, as the audience watches the killing of the two sons and the preparation of the meal it is more possible for it to dive into the continuation of the performance expecting purification from the cruel acts. Secondly, the audience by watching the participants on stage could recognize itself and this creates a two-dimensional effect from what is presented. Hence, the company manages in both cases to give a visceral experience of the show.

The particular stimulation of taste and smell makes the performance's experience more immediate and gives a direct physical reaction affecting the bodies of the audience. This intriguing of the senses strengthens the visceral experience in this live performance. Live performances are considered synaesthetic because of the manipulation of the theatrical form to present various dimensions, which cause a sensory experience. Due to its immediacy, live performances lead to an interactive exchange. The fact that in this performance the audience participates in the scene and act merely as the performers or smell and feel the preparation of the meal during the cruelest scene of the sons' killing, strengthens and brings to the foreground the liveness of the moment. Because of the 'sharability'⁷⁹ of the performers and the audience in this performance, due to its intensity, it achieves the shocking of the audience which experiences the 'reality' of the characters.

Touch: Through this performance, the audience has the chance to interact with the performers using also the sense of touch. In this part "touch" will be approached from two perspectives to illustrate how the company with this stimulation affects the audience.

⁷⁹ Machon, (*Syn*) *aesthetics*, 26.

Firstly, LFdB challenges the audience to use their ‘touch’ literally as in two instances in the play the performers offer the spectators objects to grab. At the beginning of the play the performers standing on vehicles are moving between the spectators handing them small transparent bags. Also, in the battle scene, as mentioned before⁸⁰, which takes the form of an amusement park the performers are walking through the audience offering them cotton candy. Besides the matter of contrast between these images, the audience physically participates in this scene and thus becomes more engaged in the confusion of the scene. LFdB, by using this technique of challenging the audience to touch, once more increase the aesthesis of visceral experience.

Secondly, it was considered important to add and focus in this part on the amputation of the characters hands (Lavinia, Titus). In Act 2 Lavinia, Titus’ daughter is captured by Demetrius and Chirius (Tamora’s sons) and raped consequently they cut her hands and tongue so she could not tell of the crime. When Titus finds out about the crime (Act 3), he commands his servant to cut his hand, exposing the beginning of his madness. The amputation of the hands has a direct impact towards the audience, as in this synaesthetic performance the audience experiences the acts with a sensory interaction.

Hands and specifically wrists belong to the most sensitive areas of the human body because hands create the bridge between a human being’s inner self with the outer world, between us and others. Because human wrists are connected with the sense of touch the bridge is also defined by the connection between the physicality and spirituality of the human being. Hands are not only directly linked with speech and emotions but also with individual human identity. What is more, hands are a weapon which people use to defend themselves; a weapon to work and serve human need⁸¹.

⁸⁰ In this chapter of *Stimulation of Senses*, in the section of ‘Lighting’ it was described how the battle had the form of an amusement park, 40.

⁸¹ The symbol of hands and the amputation of them is explained thoroughly in the book “*The kingdom of Eugena*” (Greek), the writer takes the different adaptations of the tragedy Eugena by Theodoros Montseleze and interpreters the symbols of the motifs in the stories. Giorgos Pefanis, *The kingdom of Eugena: Literature disposition and anthropological content of Eugena from Theodoros Montseleze*, (Alexandria editions, Athens, 2005):191.

The book is published originally in Greek: Γιώργος Πεφάνης, *Το βασίλειο της Ευγένιας: Λογοτεχνικά διακείμενα και ανθρωπολογικά περιεχόμενα στην Ευγένια του Θεόδωρου Μοντσελέζε*, (Αλεξάνδρια, Αθήνα, 2005):191.

Freud in his essay on the uncanny, based on the story of W. Hauff *Die Geschichte von der abgehaunten Hand*, defines amputation with castration⁸². Therefore, by amputating the hands of the two main characters their identity, weapon, bridge of physical and mental thought has been destroyed.

The act of amputation is suggested in Shakespeare's play. However, LFdB choose to present live these moments of the play. By this they charge the atmosphere of the theatrical space with strong emotions and reinforce the meaning of these actions. The liveness of the scenes has the direct effect on the audience to shock them with all the significance that the act of amputation carries. Since the characters lose the physical use of their wrists, the audience is more sensitive to the liveness of the scene and through the unconscious interpretation of the amputation, shocked from this loss. In the liveness of the performance, performers and spectators engage in the seduction of the live energy and the spectators are manipulated through all the theatrical elements that the company formulates aiming at the stimulation of all five senses.

Degustacion de Titus Andronicus illustrates how shock can be considered a part of a search for deeper meanings and a rediscovery of theatrical possibilities⁸³ because the audience, being placed in a shocking situation, will alert his body and mind to protect him from the 'rape' of its unconscious. So the spectator is in the process of searching for the meaning of the cruel acts, devoting himself to the performance. The theatrical elements in completing these images play their part in this devotion as the elements seduce the audience to the world of the unconscious and stimulate physical and mental sensations.

⁸² Freud, *The uncanny*, 336.

⁸³ Machon, *(Syn) aesthetics*, 36.

EPILOGUE

This paper was initiated by the interest of exploring how post-modern theater companies are strongly related to former dramaturgical strategies. The personal fascination about theatre companies that affect the audience led to the examination of the Spanish company La Fura dels Baus. Throughout their performances one can notice the ways in which the company aims at the audience's active participation as they manipulate theatrical elements to offer a visceral experience. What was significant in forming the initial ideas of this paper was the current social situation, which shows how societies are becoming accustomed to cruel events and more passive in confronting shock. However, it was fascinating to explore how the company manages to alter the physical and mental state of its audiences. This thesis approaches post-modern LFdB and shows another perspective of the company beyond the existing research. Since, it exemplifies a clear connection with Antonin Artaud's theatre and demonstrates how their dramaturgical strategies affect the audience by experiencing the effect of shock.

Shock has been defined as Walter Benjamin demonstrated it; through images which change continuously without leaving space for the audience to react and process what is being presented through consciousness. While consciousness is working as a shield to protect the system against stimuli, the rapid changes cannot be blocked and emerge in the audience's unconscious leaving traces of physical shocks. Although contemporary society is familiar to changes; increased technological development, political and environmental crises bombard people's conscious to create shock. Related to this, through theatrical language, LFdB address the audience directly and change the presented images with quick and violent alternations. They manage to enter the audience's subconscious to create a real effect. The company's decision to adopt a violent character results in creating the shock effect through "synaesthesia" as the production of sensation in one part of the body results from a stimulus applied to, or perceived by another part.

The factor of addressing a mass audience illustrates other techniques of crowd manipulation which shows how events in crowds are more intense and work instinctively. When individuals are members of a crowd, they lose part of their individuality and identity and are more vulnerable to be affected by the events that are

being presented. The techniques of affirmation, repetition of movements or images or sounds reinforced by the contagiousness of crowds, manipulate the audience's senses into feeling what the company chooses. The effect of shock which is created by the presented spectacle is given another dimension within the crowd due to the exchange of energies between the spectators and their union into one 'body'.

Thus, the company by addressing a mass audience illustrates how the masses are easier to be affected as result of contagion. Since the company manages to influence part of the audience by having a visceral experience through shock, the rest will be seduced by contagious energies. The chaotic atmosphere of a crowd moving in the theatrical space, led by the performers, intensifies not only the confusion and the uncertainty of the spectator's position in the space but also his/her role in the performance. However, this chaos is controlled by the company which shapes its theatrical elements to seduce and move the crowd according to the company's plan.

The dramaturgy that the company follows and specifically the ways in which it chooses to affect the audience refers to the dramaturgy of Antonin Artaud and his *theatre of cruelty*. Artaud's belief that theatre must "*be an action, be brutal and charged with extreme emotions*"⁸⁴, led to techniques which create visceral shocks to the body and mind of the viewer. As it has been illustrated the choice of non theatrical spaces, the mingling of the performers with the spectators, the violent character of the shows and the stimulation of the senses via the manipulation of the theatrical elements, create an atmosphere in the audience where they interact and experience the show deeply.

The first point of attention in the dramaturgical strategies of LFdB is the unconventional theatrical spaces where they present their performances. The spaces work as an external theatrical sign which ultimately produce interpretations of the performances. The unconventional spaces that Antonin Artaud and LFdB have chosen are connected to the performance's theme, for example, an old funerary was chosen from LFdB for the performance of *Suz/O/Suz* to expose the idea of exploring the primordial man. The outcome was one of awe and rituality which was further enhanced by the special lighting and exploitation of the grand space. The scenery had

⁸⁴ Edward Scheer, ed., *Antonin Artaud, A critical reader* (London: Routledge, 2004): 84.

the ability to reshape and move towards the audience which showed how the insecurity of the continuous change of position and the chaotic atmosphere had a shocking effect. Moreover, as Eisenstein implicated that a direct, aggressive address of the spectator supposedly produces “emotional shocks”, the positioning of the audience and spectators in the same space had the effect of exchanging energies between them and made the performers’ actions more intense in provoking the shock effect.

Another important factor in producing the shock effect in the audience, as illustrated, is the role of violence in LFdB’s performances. Artaud chose to have a cruel character in his theatre as he believed that exposing the audience to violence would reduce the violence in their lives; cruelty worked as a catharsis in his performances where he wished pain and suffering to have the opposite result on the spectators. As for LFdB violence is being used more radically with the performers hurting and abusing themselves and each other. As it was discussed in the performance *Imperium*, LFdB’s presentation of the female body experiencing real violence physically exposes the bodies of the audience to these violent acts.

The result of this strategy is the alteration of the image of the female body that stimulates in the audience the “uncanny” emotion. The physical effect of the “uncanny” is a sense of uncertainty and fear as spectators wonder whether they understand what they are watching. In such performances, where the image of something familiar becomes strange, the spectators are disturbed because their expectations about the capacity or the appearance of the image, in our case the female body, change and produce in the spectator the effect of shock⁸⁵. Thus, the company manages to interact with the audience to create feelings in their subconscious and subsequently the audience experiences shock in its existence.

The third dramaturgical strategy of La Fura dels Baus that has been analyzed throughout this paper illustrates how a specific manipulation of theatrical elements stimulates the audience’s senses. Artaud’s need to create a total spectacle, where all

⁸⁵ Colette Conroy, foreword., Marina Abramovic. *Theatre and the Body*. (United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010): 27.

the theatrical elements acquire an individual role, contributes to offering the audience a visceral experience. According to this observation, the work of the company also follows Artaud's strategies in creating a spectacle where its theatrical signs produce stimuli to the senses. Thus, in the performance *Degustacion de Titus Andronicus* light, video, sound, music, costume and the art of performing were manipulated by intriguing each of the senses in ways that led to a shocking experience.

Throughout this paper the connection of LFdB and Antonin Artaud besides contextualizing the work of the first, shows how dramaturgical strategies used half a century ago are still applicable and how the initial ideas of affecting the audiences are still possible. Artaud believed in the outburst of his madness, as it is told, that theatre must be as a "plague"⁸⁶ having only two options of death or cure. This idea pushed the theatrical signs to their limits by conveying cruel images to the audience such as one's disease so as to free all the repressed emotions; to bring catharsis to their lives. As this paper demonstrated LFdB success is based on this idea and goes a step further in creating this 'plague', by presenting the most unexpected acts, by combining media and by stretching the human body and behavior to its limits in the formation of inhuman figures. This "plague" in turn spreads to the audience and alerts their body and mind through shock.

"The "Cruelty" in *La Fura dels Baus*" aims to demonstrate a post- modern theatrical company which affects the audience creating a visceral experience through shock. The importance of this paper lies in its illustration of how theatrical performances can produce radical emotions in an audience who is now accustomed to shocking events and cruelties. However, this analysis of LFdB demonstrates that the spectator's subconscious can be affected by signals which stimulate it and place the audience in a process of thought. As a scholar my aim was to conclude that the company has a radical character of commenting on current issues without exposing too much and instead sends out signals for interpretation which manage to 'speak' to the emotional world of the audience and create physical shocks by the reflective response of the cruel acts presented. Shock is the initial reaction to a further inner treatment of the soul and thus, the company succeeds in changing the physical and mental situation of its spectators.

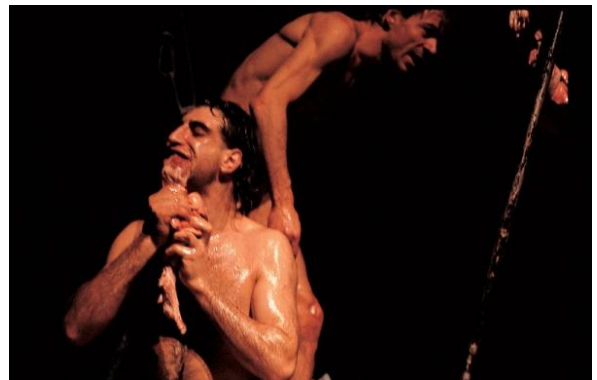
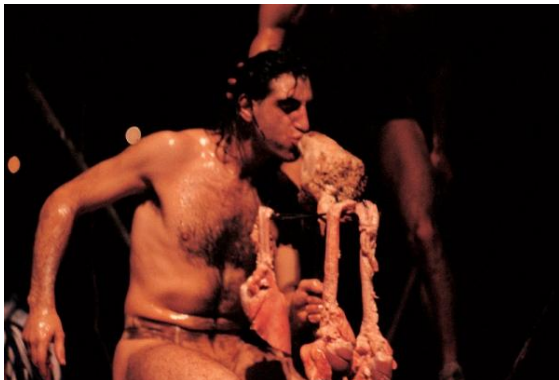
⁸⁶ Artaud, trans., Corti, 17.

La Fura dels Baus's characterization as anarchists has at its core the dramaturgy of a radical and aggressive theatrical language that aspires to awaken its audience from being passive. The effect of shock creates a 'game' in the performance which creates a diversity of emotions from being shocked to being afraid and from being uncomfortable to being free by the end of the performance. Free in the sense that the audience's subconscious will not be affected by the company's violent invasions after the performance ends. However, the consciousness due to the success of LFdB's theatrical applications will remain alert for other possible stimulations as it has passed through a process of experiencing each of its senses. What makes those senses remain alert is the audience's consciousness which passed through the state of shock. Thus, the audience's experience of sensing, interacting and thinking deeply about interpretations and meanings could continue after the performance and prepare the audience to experience further visceral experiences. La Fura dels Baus plan their performances on one main theory: to offer mental and physical stimulation which frees suppressed emotions through shock. As Artaud exemplified, if true theatre is born out of a kind of organized anarchy and if it 'frees' the repressed unconscious, it is among others, a revolt and a liberation⁸⁷.

⁸⁷ Bermel, *Artaud's Theatre*, 27.

IV. ANNEX

Suz/o/Suz (I)



IMPERIUM (II)



DEGUSTACION DE TITUS ANDRONICUS (III)



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ILLUSTRATION

- Source of pictures: www.lafura.com