

**“Performance, Theatre and Identity in twenty-first century Barcelona:  
The Transnational Theatre of Javier Daulte”**

**By**

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## Abstract

Title: "Performance, Theatre and Identity in twenty-first century Barcelona: The Transnational Theatre of Javier Daulte"

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**Abstract:** The contemporary Catalan theatre space is caught up in conflicting discourses that interlink language, politics and identity. Current approaches are unable to account for the phenomena of transatlantic theatre connections, such as the Argentine connection, because they have a tendency to read the space in terms of a Castilian-Catalan language binary. This dissertation draws upon aspects of cultural theory, examining the (post)colonial, postmodern aspects of the Catalan cultural space, and investigating how theatre, particularly how theatre in the city vortex, Barcelona, fits into this cultural space. The study goes on to take the contemporary Argentine theatre practitioner, Javier Daulte, as a case study, as an example of transatlantic theatre in the city. It examines Daulte's Catalan production of his play *¿Estás ahí? (Ets Aquí?)* to demonstrate how he has been received and understood within the performative context of the city. The aim of this investigation is to move beyond the language binary by demonstrating how the Argentine theatre presence in Barcelona provides evidence of a far more complex articulation of exchange, in the relationship between theatre and cultural identity, than has previously been supposed.

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## Introduction

**We face the paradox that language, in its attempt to render the city transparent, reveals its hermeneutic haziness.**

- Joan Ramon Resina (2008, p143)

Barcelona, the city vortex of Catalonia, is also the vortex of competing discourses that interlink culture with politics, language and identity. The contemporary Catalan theatre space, critiqued most intensely from within the city parameters, appears to be equally caught up within these divisive debates. The cultural crisis revolves around the fight against Castilian centralization, which developed from the fifteenth century onwards, manifesting itself through a series of civil conflicts with the Castilian region, culminating in Catalan defeat in the War of Secession (1702-14) and the consequential destruction of Catalan institutions. The moment is strongly retained within collective Catalan memory as the commencement of the language-identity crisis. In recent times this crisis is most clearly identified with the repression of Catalan language and culture, experienced under the thirty-five years of Francoist dictatorship that began with the end of the Spanish Civil War in 1939. As resistance movements developed, language became the key indicator of rebellion and cultural renewal both within theatre and within other cultural spheres. It was hardly surprising, therefore, that the reopening of the *Generalitat* (the Catalan regional government) in the transition period, resulted in the implementation of cultural policies that focused on language normalization.

The (re-)development of Catalan cultural identity has been obscured by a number of difficult issues including immigration and multiculturalism, Madrid-centred pro-Castilian market forces that have been reinforced by global market pressures and

complicated by the competitive need to internationalize. Further difficulties have included the ongoing conflict with Spanish state policy, and also the problems involved in locating identity within an increasingly postmodern cultural space. All of these factors have contributed towards the development of an extremely complex cultural arena that has engendered two key language-based political discourses: the first seeing an ongoing Catalan language crisis, instigated by continual State repression; the second producing anti-Catalan arguments based on the perceived existence of a reductive, localist, nationalistic Catalan community. In terms of the theatre space, the former argument diagnoses a space that is experiencing a severe identity crisis, whereas the latter discourse reads the theatre space in terms of a dominant Catalan language theatre that aggressively seeks to exclude and marginalize 'other' Catalans from being active within the cultural sphere. These attempts to use language to define Catalan theatre identity both prevent the development of positive inter-cultural discourse and obscure the evidence of a more permeable theatre space that can already be seen to exist.

Contemporary investigative studies of the Catalan cultural space range from traditional literary and historical studies to more specific studies focussing on nationalism and civic society in stateless nations. This dissertation is part of an ongoing study that sees the need for an interdisciplinary approach to deal with the deep complexities of the space. It aims to move beyond the problematic of the language binary, in an attempt to demonstrate the intricate levels of interaction within Catalan theatre, particularly evident within the contemporary theatre space in Barcelona. Critically drawing upon aspects of cultural studies, a combined use of postcolonial and postmodernist theory will enable this investigative study to account for some of the particulars of the space,

including the phenomenon of transatlantic theatre encounters, which current studies, restricted by the Catalan-Castilian language binary, have been unable to explain.

Chapter one seeks to give an analytical background for the development of contemporary Catalan theatre by looking at historical, political and social interactions both before and after the 1975 death of Franco. It examines how the Catalan cultural space can be read in postcolonial terms, and questions to what degree the 'post' can be seen as redundant, in the light of symbolic state violence and power structures. Through an exploration of the development of contemporary Catalan theatre, it looks to see how the contradictory readings of Catalan culture have been and continue to be reflected within the theatre space. It looks in detail at the controversial linking of language to cultural identity and examines the impact of language normalization policies. The study goes on to look at how the theatre space relates to escalating social and demographical changes, questioning how the institutional approach to globalising tendencies may have impacted theatre production. The problematic of a Barcelona 'brand' interrelates to internationalization and contributes, through the prioritization of Catalan performance groups, to the ongoing visual-text debate within the theatre realm. The changing patterns of migration can be seen to add to a controversial increasing hybridization of Barcelona's urban culture, which is reflected within the theatre space, augmenting the identity crisis. The later part of the chapter will look at these challenges in relation to the postmodern elements of the contemporary Catalan cultural space.

The second chapter takes the Argentine theatre practitioner, Javier Daulte, as a case study, in order to examine the impact of transatlantic theatre encounters in Barcelona. The Argentine theatre presence is one of the most vibrant 'other' theatres active within the Catalan cultural sphere and Daulte is seen to be a key proponent of this theatre trend. Looking beyond the language binary the chapter will seek to explain Daulte's unmistakable success within Barcelona. It will look at the relevance of Daulte's postmodern ideas and his belief that meaning is a process, largely constructed within theatre by the audience. It will analyse Daulte's response to the Catalan theatre scene and seek to explain why he has chosen to prioritize local Catalan theatre practitioners. Looking at how theatre space in Barcelona is organized, it will examine the significance of the Catalan production of Daulte's play, *Ets aquí?* [Are you here?]. The relevance of the play to the Catalan cultural space will be explored through questions of language, visibility, otherness and identity.

Through looking at the results obtained in the course of the case study, the conclusion aims to explore both the limits as well as the possibilities of intercultural encounter in the Barcelona theatre scene. It is seen that the highlighting of language tensions disguises evidence of a far more complex articulation of exchange.

## Chapter 1

The existence of ideological conflict within any social, cultural or political space engenders the development of “performative societies” (Kershaw, 1999, p13). The multiple ideological conflicts in Catalonia have therefore resulted in wide recognition from cultural critics of the extremely performative nature of Catalan society (Delgado, 2007; Astles, 2007). This has been documented, not only in terms of the variety of active public and commercial theatres, but also in terms of the communal nature of daily rituals. In *Cities of the Dead*, theorist Joseph Roach examines the substitutional nature of both societal and official drama, revealing how this characteristic of performative acts can contribute towards a blurring of discontinuities and ruptures, especially during moments of conflict. Thus, performance “stands in for an elusive entity that is not but that it must vainly aspire both to embody and to replace. Hence flourish the abiding yet vexed affinities between performance and memory, out of which blossom the most florid nostalgias for authenticity and origin. ‘Where memory is’ notes theorist-director Herbert Blau, ‘theatre is’” (Roach, 1996, pp3-4).

Contemporary Catalan theatre is caught up in the discourse of memory, and desires to (re)-inscribe a specifically Catalan identity in substitution for the perceived problematic of a colonial past and the on-going fear of a colonial present. The colonial relationship with the Spanish State, consolidated through centuries of cultural and language suppression, is symbolized in contemporary ‘historical’ terms by three decades of Francoist dictatorship and the problematics of the so-called transition to democracy post-1975. The increasingly important role played by theatre in the Catalan space reflects Amkpa’s suggestion that there is a tendency for theatre to become particularly

important within the colonial and postcolonial context, as a response to identity crises. Theatre becomes a significant site of struggle against oppression, not only in the official theatre space but as a daily part of communal life: (post)colonial communities make theatre “an integral part of their everyday lives at home and in public spaces” (Amkpa, 2004, p5).

As Roach explores in *Cities of the Dead*, the concept of theatre as a tool for power and freedom had already been recognized in the eighteenth century: theatre practitioner and critic Richard Steele wrote that “[t]here is no Human Invention so aptly calculated for the forming [of] a Free-born people as that of a Theatre” (in Roach, 1996, p73). In the Catalan case, as resistance developed under Franco, small theatre groups arose, particularly in the 1950s and 1960s, contributing to the search for Catalan authenticity. Amkpa suggests that within the postcolonial context a performative way of life can instigate “the capacity to not simply illustrate culture, but to make it as well” (2004, p6). This making of culture is inextricably linked to the formation of a national identity which is (re)produced through daily performance; “people act in a national context by performing everyday routines, habits and duties” (Edensor, 2002, p69). It is, however, important to recognize that theatre as a power tool is also employed from an early stage by the colonizing power: the Spanish State encourages playwrights from the seventeenth century onwards, to produce anti-Catalan theatre as a form of propaganda, which has been significant in the development of anti-Catalan sentiment throughout Spain:

King Philip IV of Castile devised a cultural policy explicitly designed to stir Castilian public opinion against Catalonia in the build-up to the so-called *Guerra*

*dels Segadors* (1640-1659) [...] The campaign consisted basically of paying Castilian playwrights to include immoral Catalan characters in their plays [...] this happened regularly in the works of a wide range of authors (Strubell, In Press).

This careful wielding of power has resulted in the seemingly fluid maintenance of colonial control, resulting in the need to question how accurately the 'post' prefix of postcolonial can be applied. Nonetheless, it is clear that the interweaving of performative acts throughout Catalan society have contributed towards the desire to construct a postcolonial identity: "theatre [...] has frequently been used as a site for manifestations and formulations of national identity; as a public form of cultural expression it is part of a polyvocal community and its interaction with the public offers a forum for negotiation and scrutiny of commonly held values and perceptions" (Astles, 2007, p323).

The definition of the Catalan space as (post)colonial is complicated by two key factors: firstly, by the multiple and contradictory academic definitions of the term 'postcolonial'; and secondly, by the multiple and contradictory ways in which the Catalan space has been claimed. "The term 'post-colonial' is resonant with all the ambiguity and complexity of the many different cultural experiences it implicates" (Ashcroft, et al., 2006, p1). It is used to describe the experience of imperial suppression in a vast number of societies. While the origins of postcolonial discourse developed through an East-West binary, the opening up of the term has allowed critics to identify the internal problematic of domination within the Western sphere. It has been recognized that Europe has constructed Spain as its exotic 'other', but this recognition obscures the

multicultural make-up of the Spanish State and the internal colonial activity of the Castilian power house (Resina, 2008). Within the context of an imaginary community called Spain, the State's relations with its peripheral cultures, including Catalonia, are based on the concept of internal colonialism, mirroring in its cultural representation the make-up of the old colonial empire.

This perceived (post)-colonial relationship with the Spanish State is, however, only one of the ways in which the Catalan space has been claimed. The colonial status is inverted by some to invoke an anti-Catalan reading that claims the victimization of Castilian-language speakers within the Catalan space. A further neutralizing reading refuses to recognize any degree of crisis, diagnosing the space as culturally healthy. Thus, "the extent to which the democratic period is a continuation or a rupture is a recurring question" (Delgado et al., 2007, p274). These radically incongruous readings of contemporary Catalonia have resulted in the emergence of a deeply complex cultural space in which performance and substitution focus on a process of memory "that depends crucially on forgetting" (Roach, 1996, p2).

This process of forgetting has naturalized questions of domination, disallowing Catalans to question the normality of their cultural space. Fernandez reads the problem in colonial terms but also as a feature of postmodernity: "the difficult transformation of the Catalan cultural field during the 1980s and 1990s has provoked a crisis in the definition of cultural models that is typically postmodern in its roots" (2008, p83). This has augmented the (post)colonial crisis of identity and legitimization of meaning: "In

postmodernity, texts and artistic objects, indeed everything that we call cultural products, do not have hidden inherent meanings that need to be discovered or deciphered; nor is the subjectivity of the artist the source of all meaning in culture; it is the consumer, who through the act of choice and consumption, fills with meanings the objects which s/he uses" (p98).

Any postcolonial space must seek to find the balance between the inevitability of forgetting and the need for mythological reconstruction of the past. In the Catalan case this balance was made very difficult to achieve because the attempts to decolonize were clouded by the type of institutionalized forgetting that left wide open the potential for ongoing colonial control. The death of Franco in 1975 was followed by a relatively peaceful transition to 'democracy'. As Wright affirms, "the success of the Spanish Transition to Democracy was achieved only on the basis of historical amnesia, in what has come to be known as the 'Pact of Silence'" (2007, p311). The new Spanish State was able to function with many of the officials from the Franco era remaining in power. Transition without revolution resulted in an imperfectly deferred political and cultural memory, allowing Francoist ideology to perpetuate itself within the new democracy and Francoist politicians to avoid paying the consequences for 'historical' misdeeds, which a more radical transition might otherwise have enforced. In this manner we see the new Spanish State functioning "as a repository of social performances, past and present [...]. It typically bases its legitimacy on precedents, mysteriously reconstructed performances whereby the dead [...] may pass judgement on the living: through the operation of the law, the state appropriates to itself not only violence but memory" (Roach, 1996, p55).

The maintenance of both Francoist structures and ideology was reflected within the theatre space by ongoing censorship. The politically motivated Catalan performance group, Els Joglars, revealed the farcical nature of new artistic freedom through their 1977 performance of *La torna* [*Left Overs*]. This satire against torture incorporated the staging of two public executions in order to question the legitimacy of the actions of the military under Franco. The political repercussions came quickly, as the still very active military forces had the group's director Boadella, along with several other members of the group, arrested. As a result of this high-profile case, a campaign for freedom of speech began right across Spain. This forced the 'democratic' government to reduce active censorship but it did not change the political approach to the past. Boadella explains that:

there was a very clear intention to not touch the past and to not seek to place blame. As we're not politicians, we broke the rules: we take an event from the past and from Franco's dictatorship and we put it on stage, and so we break the pact of silence imposed by the transition. We paid dearly for that (2007, p308).

He goes on to discuss the potential problematics that this type of institutionalized deferred memory can cause in the context of a newly emerging postcolonial space; "the bad thing about these agreements is that they seem great in the short term, but have terrible consequences in the long term" (p309).

While the whole of Spain can be seen to have suffered under the imposition of the regime's nationalist values, the peripheral cultures were explicit regime targets, in particular red, separatist Catalonia. In Catalonia "the military government under Franco

had systematically and decisively suppressed Catalan culture to such an extent that both the Catalan language and Catalan self-esteem were in decline” (Astles, 2007, p323). In order to counter this decline small resistance groups developed, becoming gradually more prominent by the 1970s. This wide-spread Catalanist sentiment led to a “collective response to the end of the years of repression” (p329). The desire to have the right to perform a meaningful identity, as well as the recognition of the language crisis, resulted in the general consensus that the implementation of an identity-based cultural policy would be a crucial part of the decolonization process (Cramer, 2008 p26; Llobera 2004 p3). The interrelation of culture, language and politics was explored in detail at the Congress of Catalan Culture (1975-1977) and the cultural policy of language normalization was defined as “consisting in the recuperation of Catalan for certain institutional uses, in a new valorization of this language by its speakers” (Resina, 2008, p144).

Theatre practitioners participated, along with many others, in mass marches in 1976, and there was general support for the re-implementation of the 1932 Catalan Statute of Autonomy which “sought to activate a shared project for the future of Catalonia” (Guibernau, 2004, p76). Moreover, the political necessity to link language to nation and culture was reflected in the theatre space in Barcelona by the organization of the first Grec festival in 1976 which ended with the foundation of the Assembly of Professional Directors and Actors of Catalonia. The Grec demonstrated the permeable nature of the theatre space that had grown up under Franco, as there was an open cooperation across generation gaps: “there are two or three generations of stage directors who see their work as an axis around which to organize a political and cultural struggle that at the

same time claims the rights to a language and to a nation” (Coca, 2008, p32). The festival exemplified the growing tendency of the theatre space to incorporate the public in its cultural and political aims: “There was the collective will to make theatre in Catalan, in everyone, for everyone and by everyone. That Grec of 1976 had as its slogan ‘a theatre at the service of the people’, and was driven by an Assembly that sought to change the direction of Catalan theatre” (Ragué-Arias, 2008, p52).

This focus on language and nation in the theatre space was reflected in the political sphere. As language oppression was seen to lie at the heart of the colonial experience, language normalization was seen as the best approach to achieving a constructive postcolonial identity. With the reopening of the *Generalitat* (the Catalan regional government) the *Convergència i Unió* (CiU), under the leadership of Jordi Pujol (in power from 1980-2003), followed the general consensus of the Catalan population by implementing a cultural policy that focused on Catalan language normalization. The subsequent reaction to these normalization policies placed Pujol in a highly contentious position, significantly complicating the colonial-postcolonial dichotomy. Childs and Williams suggest that “post-colonialism is much more to do with the painful experience of confronting the desire to recover ‘lost’ pre-colonial identities, the impossibility of actually doing so and the task of constructing some new identity on the basis of that impossibility” (1997, p14).

On the one hand, the *Generalitat* was fully entrusted with, as Childs and Williams term it, the ‘impossible’ task of recovering Catalan identity. This was complicated by the

decision to return to the modern project of the 1930s Republic: the CiU as a new political party could only share partial memory of this endeavour. On the other hand, the controversial interlinking of politics and culture that this task entailed resulted in accusations of aggressive nationalism. Influenced by State propaganda, a number of Catalan intellectuals and writers formed a collective known as the *Foro Babel*, in order to counteract attempts at language normalization, notwithstanding their apparent commitment to bilingualism (Resina, 2008). Despite the evident contradictions within the group, the ideas that emerged encouraged Castilian first language speakers, both inside and outside the Catalan space, to promote a victimization discourse. This ideology was encouraged by State media, despite Pujol's insistence that everyone who lived and worked in Catalonia could consider themselves Catalan (Cramer, 2008). The centre of political and cultural debates, as well as the key development of Catalan theatre, was Barcelona:

The behavioural vortex of the cityscape, the 'ludic space' in Roland Barthes's propitious term, constitutes the collective, social version of the psychological paradox that masquerade is the most powerful form of self-expression. The vortex is a kind of spatially induced carnival, a center of cultural self-invention through the restoration of behaviour [...] Although such a zone or district seems to offer a place for transgression, for things that couldn't happen otherwise or elsewhere, in fact what it provides is far more official: a place in which everyday practices and attitudes may be legitimated, 'brought out into the open', reinforced, celebrated, or intensified [...] The principal characteristic of such events is that they gain enough hold on collective memory that they will survive the transformation or the relocation of the spaces in which they first flourished (Roach, 1996, p28).

At State level the political sphere was set up in partial reflection of the colonizer-colonized binary, with some concessions being given to regional groups but control largely maintained by the Castilian power-house, Madrid. This can be seen from the language perspective, through the implementation of the 1978 Spanish Constitution. While an amendment made Catalan official within the boundaries of Catalonia, the ambiguity over rights and duties meant that Castilian took precedence in every region, as language of the State:

Article 3 of Spain's 1978 Constitution has been heralded as a radical new recognition of linguistic rights and cultural pluralism by many commentators. However, careful analysis of this article suggests that the politics of language in Spain remain contentious and ambiguous, in part because of the very language of politics itself. [...] The first clause of Article 3 states: 'Castilian is the official language of the state [...] All Spaniards have the *duty* to know it [...] The other Spanish languages will also be official in the respective autonomous communities in accordance with their status.' [...] This clear geographical limitation means realistically that the future role of minority languages will always take second place to Castilian. [...] Those Spanish citizens whose mother tongue is not Castilian could argue that they do not have equal linguistic rights to those who are Castilian mother-tongue speakers. A native Catalan speaker cannot insist on the right to use Catalan in official contexts (Mar-Molinero, 1995, pp332-33).

Even though further language laws, such as the 1983 Law for Linguistic Normalization, helped to consolidate the position of Catalan, the underlying principles of colonial superiority had already been laid. Resina argues that "the attacks on democratic restoration of Catalan can be understood only within the logic of domination...it is in the process of state formation that conditions are created for constituting a unified

linguistic market dominated by the official language” (2008, p162). Cramereri sees the Castilian colonial presence reflected through Castilian-language writers in Catalonia who impede re-writing of Catalan identity through “the creation of an ‘authorized’ way for Spaniards to imagine Catalonia. This is especially the case for works which make no mention of the Catalan language and therefore seem to suggest that Spanish is the normal language of all Catalans” (2008, p78). These Castilian-language writers have advocated a liberalism for the linguistic market that “has no historical basis and coexists with de facto monopolies, with state arbitration of opportunities, and, in the area of language, with massive public subsidies for diffusion of Spanish. Particularly in this area, the notion of spontaneous market forces is inapplicable, because linguistic hegemony has always been crucial to the ethnicity that controls the state” (Resina, 2008, p1262). Arenes and Škrabec also point out that “[t]he vast majority of influential media expression in Catalonia is in Spanish...Spain does not have any politics to foster the spread of Catalan language or culture in all social and cultural areas either inside or outside Catalonia” (2006, p75). This State-backed language amnesia enforces behaviour modifications and also stages a deliberate conflict discourse in which Catalan culture is made to take the blame for its own victimization. Thus, State press policies have successfully generated a reverse language logic which portrays Castilian as “the minorised language in danger of extinction, which deserves protection and which represents the values of democracy and of freedom, whereas Catalan... is the oppressive force” (Cuenca, In Press).

Thus, the ambivalent relationship between colonized and colonizer, as laid out by Bhabba (Moore-Gilbert, 1997, p117) is clearly reflected in the Catalan space. Ashcroft

notes that “the presence of such problematic resistances to transformation suggests the need for a different kind of tactic, one that does not simply occupy the fractures of discourse but exceeds the boundaries of the discourse itself” (2001a, p116). In the theatre world certain attempts have been made to exceed this discourse. A recent example can be seen in the case of Eric Bertran, a 14-year old Catalan who was prosecuted by the Madrid crown court on charges of terrorism, accused of organizing an Al Qaeda cell, “after demanding that supermarket chain DÍA label its products in the Catalan language” (<http://www.ericelfenix.cat> ). Víctor Alexandre wrote a satirical play *Èric i l'exèrcit del Fènix* [Èric and the Army of the Phoenix] in order to challenge the actions of the Civil Guard and the Spanish State. The play was performed at Barcelona’s Borrás Theatre, demonstrating the potential of Catalan theatre to exceed the constrictive colonizing discourse of the State.

While postcolonial critics agree that “the question of language is crucial”, the exact role that language should play in the context of the decolonization process is largely disputed (Moore-Gilbert, et al., 1997, p4). The ambiguous circumscribing of the Catalan cultural space that emerged out of attempts at language normalization can be seen as a reflection of these multiple discourses. On the one hand, it is argued that language lies at the heart of the postcolonial struggle because “the colonial process itself begins with language. The control over language by the imperial centre [...] remains the most potent instrument of cultural control” (Ashcroft, et al., 1995b, p283). From this perspective, Catalonia’s colonial relationship with the Spanish State can be seen to have been fully established in 1714, following the defeat of the lands of the Crown of Aragon by the Bourbon Monarch, Philip V. Under the subsequent 1716 *Nueva Planta* decree “all

Catalan political institutions were abolished and Castilian laws, absolutism and centralism were imposed; public use of the Catalan language was prohibited” (Hargreaves, 2000, p19). The enforced use of Castilian in all public situations played on the colonial myth that the indigenous culture is inferior, causing Catalans to face “suggestions that their culture is second-class” (Crameri, 2000, p119). If, as Thiong’O suggests, “culture is almost indistinguishable from the language that makes possible its genesis” (1995, p289), then it follows that the return to the mother tongue must be a powerful tool in the construction of a postcolonial identity. Giner suggests that this principle does apply to the Catalan case because “the language maintains certain attitudes, symbols, traditions and myths which form the core of the Catalan culture” (in Llobera, 2004, p114). This is demonstrated throughout periods of strong repression, where language use is maintained as a key mode of cultural resistance.

On the other hand, the claim that language holds essential cultural truth can be seen to contribute towards potentially aggressive nationalism: “Language functions within this site to cement the symbolic universe of the nation as an ideal entity” (Haddour, 2000, p156). The interlinking of language with politics can contribute towards viewing one’s own identity in the postcolonial context, as “natural rather than imagined and politically driven. There is a real danger in assuming that “the overthrow of colonialism be replaced with another, liberated and assumedly authentic identity” (Masolo, 1997, p285). Despite her sympathies for the Catalan postcolonial case, Catalanist academic Crameri acknowledges that all “national identities depend heavily on the operation of doxa, and the Catalan case is no exception [...] the CiU were influenced by, and perpetuated, a particularly clear cultural doxa based around the intimate identification

of language with identity” (2008, p12). This explicit nationalism posed a challenge to the seemingly more banal nationalism of the Spanish State but also resulted in the CiU being made a scapegoat for claims that Catalan language-based nationalism had become as oppressive as the Franco regime, a colonizing threat to the Castilian presence. However, Cramerer also implies that no matter the basis for its construct, doxa is inescapable. Butler draws upon Althusser’s theory that ideology is always present in an apparatus to demonstrate that identity must inevitably be formed in relation to ideology (Butler, 1997). While there was a clear reaction to the development of Catalan nationalism, from both Catalan and non-Catalan speakers, it is clear that the very development of Catalan identity was also dictated by the restrictions of the State’s ongoing colonizing ideology.

Whilst the intermingling of culture and identity with politics can be problematic, it is equally problematic to view the situation as a simple binary. In post-colonial terms, the Generalitat’s attempts to go beyond the limitations of the colonial discourse, through the political emphasis on language, could be interpreted as a necessary excess, in order to promote basic language survival: “excess [...] is sometimes a necessary feature of the attempt to make a space for oneself in the world” (Ashcroft, 2001a, p117). A difference here must be construed between the concept of resistance and insistence, “resistance that defines itself as opposition is merely defensive, whereas insistence is productive, assertive and excessive” (p119). Ashcroft goes on to assert that “the ultimate goal of counter-discursive interpolation is not simply to fracture a discourse but to exceed its boundaries” (p123). It would therefore be possible to view the language policy as a difficult necessity, in order to exceed the colonially-imposed boundaries. However, the

symbolic violence of the State simultaneously contributed towards the limitations of language normalization. The CiU were accused by some sectors of society of not being explicit enough, but the ambivalence lying at the core of their representations of culture and identity can be seen as a response to colonial pressure. Ashcroft suggests that from a postcolonial perspective it is clear that “there are some institutions, such as the post-colonial nation-state, where transformation has very often failed to take place. Invariably, sovereignty has been transferred without being transformed...continuance of imperially established structures of power” (2001a, p116). In a similar manner the criticism of Catalan nationalism from Catalan cultural groups, exemplified within the theatre world by Boadella who sees himself as an antibody “ for the disagreeable virus of nationalism” (2007, p303), cannot be separated from the effects of State driven anti-Catalan market forces. Ultimately the rejection of Catalan identity is symbolic of the ultimate colonial inferiority complex: “mingling stubborn self-pride with an imposed self-rejection, typical products of a situation of colonial ambivalence” (Shohat, 1997, p59).

The opposing views have developed into multiple discourses, becoming debates at all levels of society and within all cultural spheres, leading to the consolidation of cultural rifts. Further to the ongoing power-struggle with the State, internal politics have also been largely complicated by conflicts between the right-wing Generalitat and socialist Town Hall ideology. However, the critical construct of this internal political binary has prevented wider readings of the cultural space, and misrecognised the complexities of ongoing State power structures. The place of theatre within this (post)colonial context was embroiled within these contradictory readings of the Catalan space, creating a deep

complexity at the level of cultural interpretation. Theatre was seen to be “at the centre of the debates around language and identity that have shaped the establishment of a cultural infrastructure for Catalonia”, not only in the performativity of daily life, but seen also through the apparent prioritization of Catalan-language theatre and the controversial construction of the TNC, the Catalan National Theatre (Delgado et al., 2007, p274).

Language normalization had an impact within the theatre realm through cultural institutionalization and the emergence of subsidies. Critics such as Orozco claim that this institutional interference perpetuated a repressive anti-Castilian climate which can be defined in postcolonial terms: “The dangers of a national bourgeoisie using nationalism to maintain its own power demonstrates one of the principal dangers of nationalism – that it frequently takes over the hegemonic control of the imperial power, thus replicating the conditions it rises up to combat. It develops as a function of this control, a monocular and sometimes xenophobic view of identity and a coercive view of national commitment” (Ashcroft, et al., 1995a, p151). The privileging of Catalan could therefore be seen as engendering a Catalan nationalism which was itself a premise of bourgeoisie ideology. Orozco suggests that this has resulted in “a cultural policy which is more beneficial for the government than for the citizens” (2007, p24).

Although Orozco is accurate in her claims that Catalan subsidies prioritize Catalan language theatre, she fails to bring the complexities of the colonizing State power into the equation. The weak position of Catalan autonomous government is reflected by

limited devolution and total lack of tax-bearing powers. The State's financial colonization is seen in the relatively small percentage of tax money that is returned to Catalonia and consequentially minimal amount that can be realistically given out in cultural subsidies. This is combined with the State's colonizing gaze that refuses to recognize the multicultural nature of the State, and refuses to subsidize any non-Castilian cultural production:

one of the most important issues in the relationship between Catalonia and Spain within the present legal framework concerns the inadequacy of autonomous funding, coupled with low public investment by the state in Catalonia. Both of these factors damage the material well-being of Catalans, curb economic growth and hinder the unequivocal vitality of Catalan enterprise (Guibernau, 2004, p92).

The only public support available for Catalan theatre productions comes from the relatively powerless Catalan institutions. The institutional interference in the arts world can therefore be interpreted as a colonizer-colonized binary with the Catalan and Castilian components being portrayed as the victim by opposing factions.

In order to have a more complete understanding of how contemporary Catalan theatre fits into these cultural-identity politics, it is important to analyse its development both pre- and post-1975. Although the marked interrelation of culture and politics in the post-Franco era inevitably emphasized the (post)-colonial language divide, the performance of this divide was hardly a new development in Catalan society. On the one hand, in viewing language at the centre of the centuries-long colonial conflict with the Spanish State, it is possible to see a pro-Catalan-language policy in the development of

Catalan theatre. On the other hand, it can be problematic to attempt to enforce this binary onto a cultural space which shows evidence of a more pluralistic nature.

Tensions with the Spanish State affected Catalan language cultural production long before the 1716 *Nueva Planta* decree. The 1474 union of the crowns of Aragon and Castile greatly contributed towards the assertion of Castilian as the “principle means of literary expression” (Nuez, 1984, p478). Representations of theatre in the Catalan language were banned in the eighteenth century. However, periods of cultural repression were interspersed with moments of perceived Catalan cultural renewal. Enlightenment thought resulted in a growing sense within Catalonia that the Catalan language ought to be defended. The nineteenth century *Renaixença* developed this concept of defence against the colonial power, affirming the Catalan language within the context of an imagined Catalan nationhood. This was reflected within the Barcelona theatre space by the opening of the Romea theatre in 1863 which was to take on symbolic value for Catalan language theatre. Playwrights of the period began to recognize the value of mother-tongue cultural production:

The Catalan dramatists of the Romantic period went on to draw on their own (i.e. local/Catalan) history, and in doing so they realised that they should not continue to maintain the diglossia that elevated Castilian as the only language of culture (Foguet i Boreu, 2005, p34).

Federic Soler, (1839-1895), produced the first official full length Catalan language play in 1865, *Tal faràs, tal trobaàs* [*As ye sew so shall ye reap*]. The threat to colonial ideology was clear, and “in 1867, plays in languages other than Castilian were [once again]

banned” (Resina, 2008, p162). This did not prevent the emergence of Angel Guimerà (1845-1924), a prominent playwright who used Catalan verse and prose in a new way, later to be recognized as the father of modern Catalan theatre. This cultural renewal also resulted in lively theatre activity at an amateur level.

The modernisme movement of the late nineteenth century broke with the perceived regionalism of the Renaixença and brought with it a further complicating factor to the language-theatre debate. Theatre practitioners such as Santiago Rusiñol, (1861-1931), and Adrià Gual, (1872-1943), looked abroad, absorbing foreign influences such as Ibsen and Maeterlinck. In addition to this, rapid societal changes also had an impact and Barcelona arose as the vortex of social and cultural production:

This society was centred on Barcelona and characterized by rapid industrialization, the growth of an industrial working class, radicalism, and an increasing identification with a Catalanism which was born of a sense of frustration with Madrid and the centralized Spanish State (George and London, 1996, p12).

The translation of foreign plays reflected not so much a move away from Catalan authenticity, as a desire to challenge the Castilian form. According to polysystem theory, minority languages often use translation to fill in gaps in their own culture. In the search to avoid domination “translation becomes fundamental to the lives and livelihood of everyone in the entire region” (Gentzler, 2001, p107).

The turn of the twentieth century brought about a specifically Catalan cultural movement, *Noucentisme*, which sought to overcome the periodic bans on cultural

production through the creation of a cultural infrastructure, in order to develop and sustain an autonomous Catalan culture. However, the appropriation of theatre spaces by politically-motivated labour movements contributed towards criticism of the poverty of Catalan language theatre. Riots and insurrections in Barcelona led to numerous states of emergency being declared which led to stricter censorship and the closure of cultural spaces. Nonetheless, the crisis in the official theatre space disguised the rapidly growing amateur theatre activity that included pop festival, workers athenaeums, and church related theatre activities. This development of communal theatre activity laid the foundations for a performative tradition, the use of theatre being used as a form of resistant (post)colonial behaviour, which became clearer in the Primo de Rivera dictatorship (1923-1930). The brief relative cultural freedom of the Second Republic (1931-1936) was too short to establish a successful official Catalan theatre space, and was constricted by the complexities of the private market, run by impresarios who preferred not to take any major cultural risks.

The culmination of the Civil War (1936-1939) in Nationalist victory led to colonizing attempts at cultural genocide that bore no recognition of the number of Catalans who had fought on the Nationalist side (Resina, 2008). Catalan language theatre was banned, as was the use of the Catalan language in the public realm. This colonial focus on language caused official theatre to suffer more than any other genre, as vast numbers of theatre practitioners were forced either into exile or to abandon the profession. However, the crisis was far more complex than a simple language binary might imply, with the overall effects of censorship provoking on the one hand an apparent lack of artistic renewal and on the other a simultaneous clandestine theatrical resurgence.

While relaxation of laws after 1946 allowed some Catalan language public performances, censorship restrictions prevented open theatre innovation and development. Nevertheless, developing in less-legitimate spaces and engendering a greater level of community involvement, non-professional, liminal theatre movements produced a radically new definition of Catalan theatre: “the real revival of Catalan came from sources which were far removed from the commercial stage” (Gallen, 1996, p22). Private theatre readings in the 1940s developed into clandestine shoestring community theatre groups that laid the basis for the rebellious movement of independent theatre in the 1950s and 1960s. Lluís Pasqual states:

As for Francoism, there is a very simple fact. From the moment when someone tries to eliminate the transmission of a culture – that is, its languages – they also try to eliminate that identity. Catalan theatre and the Catalan language were choked, but they didn’t manage to suffocate or kill them [...] a theatre stage is a political stage [...] at a specific moment, in order to survive, Catalan theatre had to start from scratch (in Astles, 2007, p326).

“Difficult and courageous” attempts to start from scratch include the founding of the independent theatre company *Agrupació Dramàtica de Barcelona* (ADB) in 1955 and the Theatre School *Escola d’Art Dramàtic Adrià Gual* in 1960 (George, 2002, p91). Although disbanded by Government order in 1963, the ADB was successful in staging a number of important foreign translations, as well as premiering work from politically motivated Catalan language playwrights such as Salvador Espriu, Joan Brossa and Manuel de Pedrolo who stated “my dramatic work always revolves round the same problem [...] fundamentally, that of freedom”(in Terry, 2003, p120).

These developments contributed towards the growing independent theatre movement in the 1960s, involving playwrights such as Benet, who focuses on the problem of Catalan identity (de la Nuez, 1984, p483). The independent movement encouraged collective creation and audience participation. Like rebellious independent theatre groups in the rest of the State, these cooperatives shared two objectives: “a left-wing struggle against Franco's regime and the establishment of a new professional mandate for the theatre, which would exist on the margins of the complacently bourgeois and escapist commercial stage” (Saumell, 1997, p5).

Roach draws on Foucault to demonstrate that the colonial prohibition of theatre must inevitably produce a positive response at the margins of society:

The effect of law on corporeal performance, and hence on collective memory, is never wholly negative (or, if Foucault's view prevails, even predominantly so). Even acts of rigorous prohibition produce alternative, displaced versions of the proscribed behaviours when performers test the limits of the law, incorporating innovations that would not have existed otherwise, creating routines of words and gestures on the margins of legal sanction (1996, p56).

Scott also believes that “if dominance is particularly severe, it is likely to produce a hidden transcript of corresponding richness” (in Roach, 1996, p56). This richness in the Catalan theatre space can be seen in a transgressive strand that stood in direct opposition to the establishment. In the 1960s and early 1970s a number of performance groups developed out of the independent theatre movement, challenging language censorship through the creation of:

a new theatrical language in which the growing sensibility was towards visual theatre. This 'sensibility' can be seen as a deep cultural awareness based on an understanding of the meeting of past and present at a crucial moment in Catalan history. The written word became associated with Spanish and a formal, old-fashioned and oppressive past, whereas the visual image was seen as a symbol of a collective imagination that aspired to freedom through artistic expression. The negotiation and enunciation of Catalan cultural identity at this time derives from a history of linguistic marginalization (Astles, 2007,p326).

The implicit political nature of non-text-based groups such as Els Joglars and the Comediants engendered a postcolonial form of cultural nationalism that "provided the most plausible means of resistance to the totalitarian nationalism of the Franco dictatorship" (Cramer, 2008, p4). However, the radical anti-colonial potential of these groups did not prevent a pessimistic vision of Catalan theatre, especially towards the end of the Franco regime as "there occurred a further stage in the colonisation by Madrid of Catalan theatre, especially by groups from the Independent sector, while their Catalan counterparts were gradually dismembered" (Gallen,1996, p29). The crisis was further emphasized by the lack of recognition of contemporary text-based Catalan language playwrights such as Benet i Jornet, Teixidor and Sirera. The problematics of the transition period led to a growing nostalgia for the Franco era, because the resistance groups of the dictatorship developed a strong sense of cultural identity that was uncoloured by the ambivalences of the democracy and the (post)colonial era.

Nonetheless, the marginal forms of theatrical resistance continued into the transitional period, developing into an atmosphere of Carnival and contributing to the cultivation of a (post)colonial identity based on a celebration of popular village mythology:

[T]he spirit of carnival prevailed. Most groups worked outdoors: space in this case public, open space, was re-created and took on a very vital meaning during these effervescent years when Catalan theatre occupied squares and streets, performing defiant and celebratory manifestations reminiscent of the Catalan village festival [...] Discourses on space can be used as a means of understanding systems of power, and deliberate re-writing of space can give people ways of rewriting their own histories through spatial appropriation. This clearly happened as street life and culture took on a new value with the re-occupation of Catalan towns and villages (Astles, 2007, p327).

Francesc Foguet i Boreu suggests that this vitality of the theatre scene was demonstrated by its ability to cultivate its own mythology: "Theatre shows its vitality if it is capable of creating its own mythology... Catalan dramaturgy ... too has attempted to create its own mythological structure.... The formation of myths, in addition to their continued metamorphosis, is inherently necessary for all cultures"(2005, p34). Thus, the boundary between official and unofficial theatre was blurred, as the community was encouraged to participate in the claiming back of colonial spaces. The active spectator within the new democracy revealed the political potential of theatre for the renewal of the community. Bedregal comments that in the Catalan case, "theatre has always been an event that implicates the spectator in an experience that is not only aesthetic, but also ethical and political" (2008, p13).

The importance of this political emphasis in the early years of democracy can be defined in postcolonial terms by the important emphasis on the liminal theatre space, instigated by alternative, independent theatre movements. Far from the constrictions implied by a binary language logic, the liminal can be defined as:

the transcultural space in which strategies for personal or communal self-hood may be elaborated, a region in which there is a continual process of movement and interchange between different states [...] The colonized subject may dwell in the liminal space between colonial discourse and the assumption of a new 'non-colonial' identity. But such identification is never simply a movement from one identity to another; it is a constant process of engagement, contestation and appropriation (Ashcroft et al., 1998, p130).

Even as the political drive diminished, the importance of the liminal space was maintained in the alternative sector, with theatre groups, such as the Sala Beckett, seeing the importance of "living at the margins, of crossing the boundaries, of literally being at the 'threshold' of culture's inside/outside" (Roach, 1992, p13). Feldman emphasizes the importance of the Sala Beckett's liminal stance, suggesting that this has created "a setting in which risk, experimentation and pedagogy are emphasized over commercialism and frivolity, and where subtlety and discreteness are given precedence over hyperbole and excess" (2007, p370). The Sala Beckett has helped stimulate the careers of numerous important contemporary theatre practitioners based in Barcelona, including Sergi Belbel, Lluïsa Cunillé and Carles Batlle, contributing towards the permeation of liminal ideas across the city theatre space. Delgado comments that the liminal has indeed been evident right across the theatre scene:

Any examination of the development of Barcelona's theatrical infrastructure since the death of Franco in 1975 indicates a favouring of liminal locations on the

fringes of official activity – the streets, market, the metro, the Mercat de les Flors converted from the city's old flower market in 1985 and the Teatre Lliure, which opened in a derelict workers' cooperative in the then working-class [...] district of Gràcia (2007, p280).

This made possible the creation of, in Bhabha's words, the Third Space: "postcolonial desires prised open a space of 'in-betweenness' between the overlapping modernities that map our world" (in Amkpa, 2004, p11). It is important that "the productive capacities of the Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory...may open the conceptualising of an *international* culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the *diversity* of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's *hybridity*" (Bhabha, 1994, p38). This hybridity was evident in the Barcelona theatre space in the incorporation of non-legitimate spaces and in the open encouragement of communal performativity. This sharing of space led to the emergence of new performance groups such as La Cubana, who "conceived the supposedly everyday as theatricalized environment" (Milán, 2007, p346).

While the theatre community as a whole recognized the need to focus on a clear language policy, the rise of the visual performance group, although originating as a resistance to Francoist language oppression, ironically contributed to a crisis in Catalan language textual theatre as well as the sidelining of the generation of playwrights, such as Brossa, who struggled to survive in a Francoist space. Although the institutions encouraged the creation of a Catalan theatre canon, the prioritization of translation alongside the continuing preference of the visual resulted in the creation of a complex postcolonial language crisis within the theatre space. Battle comments that "the

prevailing tendency was to discredit dramatic literature and the figure of the author, and self-hate grew to the point that dramatists were at the point of disappearing completely” (2007, p416). However, the late 1980s brought about a radically altered attitude towards home-grown dramaturgy and the 1990s saw a proliferation of productive text-based playwrights. Writers such as Cunillé approached the ongoing (post)colonial ambiguities of the Catalan cultural space through a postmodernist perspective, presenting “the terrible, grey patina of everyday life in society; its solitude, its lack of communication, its need to construct excuses to allow for minimal exchange [...] postmodern man, divided by a multiple perspective which he both projects onto the world and his own individuality and which refracts back to demonstrate a splintered whole” (pp418-9). This new panorama was largely restricted to Barcelona, as the only large centre of Catalan theatre production.

Bennett suggests that the cultural power structures will inevitably exercise a form of censorship, and though it may not be as threatening as the colonial process, oppressive economic factors will “often determine why particular products are available and constitute culture” (1997, p109). Foguet i Boreu highlights the additional vulnerabilities of the Catalan theatre space that lacked the well-founded symbolic base of other European theatres. He advocates the communal responsibility for a positive ongoing theatre development:

Theatre space, whatever its characteristics, demands a convention which nobody can avoid [...]The more solid its symbolic space, the more invisible this is. The more fragile it is, the more visible and, in consequence, the more susceptible it is to provoke prejudice, self-hatred or ingratitude. Hegemonic dramaturgies are able to usurp the space of minorised ones, but they do not allow anyone to

question their limits, notwithstanding the cracks that appear... Even so, at a time when almost everybody rejects the adscription of identities, some because they are clear about their own identity or allow the market or political power to clarify them for them, others because they swim –or keep their clothiers— between two or three seas, the only unanimous loyalties appear to be the ideologically *biased* ones: theatre artists are produced not only by their cvs, but above all by their audience, by *their* theatre (2005, pp35-36).

The vulnerability of the local becomes even more important to consider in the context of rapidly increasing globalization. This is a particularly salient point when reflecting on the robust impact of globalization on cultural production within Barcelona, which has also been affected by the politicians' response to global forces. The city vortex has had to accommodate vast waves of migration: “the power of Spanish in an era of globalization, and the huge increase in immigration from Latin America, North Africa and Eastern Europe (mainly to the Barcelona area) over the past twenty-five years have inevitably been perceived to place strains on the Catalan language” (Delgado et al.,2007, p273). This rapid demographic change has taken place while the city still struggles to accommodate the internal migration patterns of the dictatorship period.

Both the Generalitat and the Town Hall policies can be interpreted in terms of postcolonial minority group survival and in terms of voluntary self-exploitation. On the one hand Catalan politicians have seen global forces as “an extension of the cultural threat represented by the Spanish State” (Cramer, 2008, p175), and have therefore seen the need to fight to maintain the concept of the Catalan nation. Edensor states that “despite the globalisation of economies, cultures and social processes, the scalar model

of identity is believed to be primarily anchored in national space [...] At the level of culture, then, there is a reification of the nation” (2002, p1). Pujol gave a speech in 2001 suggesting that global protagonism could only be achieved by focussing on a “strong and well-defined identity, which must be based on Catalonia’s cultural heritage and the continuity of its traditionally cohesive society” (Crameri, 2008, p175). The maintenance of the national was linked to both the use of theatre as a regeneration tool and the grand architectural project in Barcelona, to rejuvenate the city and place it at a cultural level on the world map. This contributed in terms of the establishment of postcolonial identity towards the project of memory as forgetting:

the replacement of environments of memory by places of memory, such as archives, monuments, and theme parks: ‘moments of history torn away from the movement of history, then returned; no longer quite life, nor yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded (Roach, 1996, p26).

On the other hand, achieving global protagonism for the city of Barcelona has also involved “a form of cultural and social standardization of the city in order to offer the tourist or potential investor a coherent package to buy into” (p178). The creation of this ‘Barcelona Brand’ has had an impact on the city theatre space, specifically in the incorporation of certain performance groups into the ‘Brand’, that were seen as being most marketable abroad. This was evident with the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Games opening and closing ceremonies:

La Fura and Els Comediants had toured internationally before the Olympics, but the events of 1992 served [...] to associate them firmly with the geographical landscape of Catalonia, converting them into visible cultural trade marks [...] In the global marketplace on a voracious search for the new, Catalonia’s cultural wares have become vibrant commodities of theatrical exchange across the temple of the theatrical museum (Delgado, 2007, p279).

This concentration on the visual trademark conveniently served to disguise the language debate from the penetrating view of the outside 'other'. The controversial incorporation of performance groups into the Barcelona Brand can be seen as a globalizing undermining of the liminal space. Turner describes the liminal as, "a state of betwixt-and-betweenness, a 'subjunctive mood' in the grammar of communal activity – characterized as 'social dramas' those behaviours in which normal categories are transgressed or suspended only to be reaffirmed by ritual processes or reincorporation"(in Roach, 1996, p37). Thus, the pressures of the global competitive market contribute towards the commoditization of the ruptural space: "vortices of behaviour tend to occupy liminal ground, situated in the penumbra of the law, open to appropriation by both official texts and hidden transcripts" (Roach, 1996, p64). This can be seen in the case of *Mar Mediterrània*, the Fura del Baus' contribution towards the 1992 opening ceremony. The performance can be read in postcolonial terms: in a battle between good and evil Hercules is presented as the mythical founder of the city, contributing to the creation of an imagined history that attempts to wipe out the colonial past:

The key to understanding how performances worked *within* a culture, recognizing that a fixed and unified culture exists only as a convenient but dangerous fiction, is to illuminate the process of surrogation as it operated *between* the participating cultures [...] invented themselves by performing their pasts in the presence of others (p5).

However, the performance is immediately undermined through its commercialization and its representation as a Spanish 'other', fit for international consumption:

The rise of the performance companies has come alongside that of Barcelona as Europe's premier weekend escape tourist destination for UK travellers. If Catalonia has replaced Andalucia as the desired tourist location so the companies have supplanted the iconography of flamenco and *corridos* as the personification of the 'exotic other' of Spain (Delgado, 2007, p 279).

On a broader scale, globalizational tendencies have served to re-instigate crisis discourses centred on the old language debate and the assumption continues to be made by many that this binary must be reflected within the theatre space. However, theatre practitioners based in the city recognize that the challenges imposed by global postmodernity have created a far more complex space:

Even so, we are also conscious of belonging to a society in which individuals are ever more 'hybrid': whether because of their genetic inheritance or the cultural setting in which they spent their early years, the dissolution of their mother tongue or of the geographical space in which they happen to live. How can we marry that with the recognition of identity and tradition? How can we avoid allowing cosmopolitanism and 'mestissage' – and perhaps the impossibility of recognising a tradition – to dissolve contemporary creation into a magma of uniformity and globalization? Are we doomed to failure? Or could mestissage become the source of new invented traditions (ephemeral, no doubt, but nevertheless fully universal in their beautiful singularity) (Battle, 2005, p8).

As language debates continue to arise at all levels of society, they are complicated by the pressures of an additional identity crisis which is inherent in an increasingly postmodern cultural space. Postmodernism can be read, according to Lyotard, as a condition:

The condition it represents reflects the collapse of categories themselves, an implosion that has been attributed to the media-saturated powers of capitalistic production and consumption. Postmodernity has been described as a culture of 'hyperrepresentation' in which objects lose their authenticity and become indefinitely reproducible and representable as commodities [...] Performance research and practice both have found in postmodernity a positive stimulus to creative work, an opening out and up of imaginative possibility whereby the emotive and cognitive, the popular and the esoteric, the local and the global can come into play (Reinelt and Roach, 1992, p1).

The Barcelona theatre space has in many ways embraced the challenges laid out by an interweaving of postcolonial and postmodern crises, questioning the limits of hybridity and looking at how linguistic, cultural and political boundaries might be overcome. This can be seen for example in the work of Batlle, whose theatre invites the spectator "to ponder the fluid nature of boundaries, identities and hybridities: those that are spatial physical, or corporal, and those that are aesthetic, ethnic, racial, cultural, or linguistic" (Feldman, 2007, p382). This postmodern stimulus for creative work is seen far more in theatre than in other sectors of Catalan culture, where the question of value is still extremely contentious. The increasing complexities of the globalized postmodern era have resulted in the emergence of a theatre space that cannot be read in simple language binary terms. Moving beyond divisive discourse, theatre practitioners based in the city have begun a more open dialogue with the variety of theatre influences active in the space. This has been particularly obvious, since the turn of the twenty-first century, in collaborations that have been made with the Argentine theatre presence. The following chapter will go on to examine this transnational connection by taking the Argentine theatre practitioner Javier Daulte as a case study.

## Chapter 2

In Catalonia, economic, social and cultural changes associated with globalization began to gather momentum from the start of the 1990s. Barcelona, the city vortex of the Catalan nation has borne the brunt of this radical process of change (Cramer, 2008). The 1992 Barcelona Olympics proved to instigate Barcelona's willingness to package itself, illustrating "the move from banal nationalism to brand nationalism in the new global order" (Urry, 2003, p107). Global market forces have also led to the rapid escalation of international immigration to the city. Jameson's definition of postmodernism as "a transitional period between two stages of capitalist, in which the earlier forms of the economic are in the process of being restructured on a global scale" (in McLaren, 1995, p179-80), allows the critic to see in Barcelona the emergence of postmodern space that has been inscribed on top of the pre-existing (post)colonial space. Therefore, any critical reading of the contemporary Catalonia must recognise both the (post)colonial and postmodern characteristics of the Catalan cultural space. The reading must also recognize the helpfulness but also the conflicts involved in applying postcolonial and postmodernist theory simultaneously:

For some critics, any attempt to fuse the two in a common theoretical inquiry is bound to occlude serious problems of the degree to which the unfinished business of late capitalism differently affects postmodern and postcolonial conditions. More crucially, it is also argued that the postmodern is part of an ensemble of the hierarchizing impulse of Western discourses, and that even though it hints at pluralism and seems to favour an attack on hegemonic discourses, it is ultimately apolitical and does not feed into larger projects of emancipation. To collocate the two, then, is somehow to disempower the

postcolonial, which is conceived to be more concerned with pressing economic, political, and cultural inequalities (Quayson, 2000, p132).

Postcolonial critics such as Ekpo (1995) and Sangari (1987) particularly reject postmodernism on the grounds that it is a disempowering Western construct, unsuited to discussions of the postcolonial realm. However, the definition of Catalonia as a western location very much affected by postmodern issues somewhat reduces the possibility of completely rejecting postmodernism. Other cultural critics have, in fact, been able to recognize an affinity of issues and strategies that allow postcolonialism and the postmodernism to become mutually reinforcing: they “may be brought together in common thematic, rhetorical and strategic concerns, especially as these are brought to bear on questions of marginality” (Quayson, 2000, p133). The shared ‘post’ prefix “aligns them both to similar problematics of temporal sequence [and] raises problems of continuity and rupture for both terms” whereas “the ‘ism’ in both indicates their shared mutuality as second-order mediations, which, even though not coalescing into clear-cut ideologies, nonetheless seek to distinguish themselves from central positions in their various fields of inquiry. Both are thought to be second-order mediations upon real (and imagined) conditions in the contemporary world” (p134). Conner suggests that the two terms interrelate both through representational discourse and through the mapping of centre and periphery “since the semiotics of mapping as an actual expression and fulfilment of imperial domination make the question of imagined conceptual political space a particularly important one” (1997, p263). In relation to the workings of power in representational discourse he goes on to state that “the postmodernist condemnation of universalizing metanarratives provides in this context a riposte to that oppressive story of the unfolding of a unified destiny for Man” (p263).

Issues of representation and domination are frequently taken up by postmodernist writers: “the superimposition of different worlds in many a postmodern novel, worlds between which an uncommunicative ‘otherness’ prevails in a space of coexistence, bears an uncanny relationship to the increasing ghettoization, disempowerment , and isolation of poverty and minority populations” (Harvey, 1989, pp113-114).

The interrelated connections between the two discourses can also help with a recognition of the manner in which the postmodern condition has worked in the Catalan space to exacerbate the (post)colonial problematic. In cities such as Barcelona a double-disempowerment is experienced as the colonial forces of the state are multiplied by “the vast assimilation of more and more areas of life to the logic of marketplace” (Quayson, 2000, p139). At the same time, there is a need to be wary of the apolitical tendencies within postmodernist discourse which could potentially view postcolonialism as nothing more than “one more language game”, thereby subsuming and assimilating “diverse political and cultural standpoints” (McLaren, 1995, p199). However, the very complexity of the Catalan space suggests that, despite potential dangers of assimilation, critical solutions will require a multiple approach. Elements of postmodernist theory remain useful, but it is important not to simply conflate postmodernist social theory with the postmodern condition, thereby promoting a vested interest in the latter, ignoring the additional realities of the space (McLaren, 1995, 188).

The crossover of the (post)colonial and the postmodern has had an inevitable impact within the contemporary Barcelona theatre space, leading to complex issues of

domination and intercultural hybridity. From around the turn of the twenty-first century the growing internationalization has led to a greater variety of 'other' theatre presences becoming active within the space. The Argentine theatre presence can be considered as one of the most vibrant 'other' theatres. Casares notes that "in the past few years in Argentina they have been producing really interesting work... and this has led to the arrival of a major wave of Argentine practitioners in Barcelona"(2005, p98). This presence has been seen in active participation in the Grec theatre festival, as well as in other theatre festivals in Catalonia, outside of the city. Argentine theatre practitioners have also become more involved in all types of theatre activity within the city, from directing and acting to running theatre courses. Without a doubt, the most important contact has been with Javier Daulte (Buenos Aires, 1963), who since his first visit, as a tourist in 1999, has become a household name in the city: "Javier Daulte has stood as an emblem for the Argentine theatre presence [in Barcelona]. He has been very well received, right from the start" (Rodriguez, appendix 4, p95).

Daulte's success in Barcelona can be seen as the consequence of a multilateral theatre system, based not only on what Daulte has been able to offer to the city but also what the city has been able to offer to him. A number of key factors, indicative of the permeable potential of the Catalan theatre space, helped to ensure Daulte's welcome. The first of these factors is the role played by theatre festivals within Catalonia including Sitges, Temporada Alta and the Grec. This festival tradition emerged out of the politically motivated independent theatre movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Established on anti-establishment, alternative principles, the festivals have retained a liminal structure that allows them to function as a gateway for alternative theatre to the

official city circuit. Since the transition to democracy, festival activity has particularly helped to foster international theatre relations, helping to incorporate 'other' theatres into the system. It is therefore not surprising that Daulte's debut in the Catalan theatre space took place outside of the city, with the performance of *Faros de color* in the 2000 Sitges festival. Rodriguez notes that the play was "well received by both the general public and the theatre critics, and when it was later put on in Barcelona a huge number of people went to see it" (appendix 4, p95) sparking off Daulte's success in the city theatre space.

Another important mediatory element has been the role played by alternative theatre groups, whose potential for permeability has been clearly demonstrated through their liminal approach to the theatre space. Alongside giving priority support to young contemporary writers, alternative theatre groups have also played a vital role in helping international practitioners become more established within the city. The Sala Beckett, in particular, has established close links with Argentine theatre practitioners such as Daulte, Spregelburd, Veronese and Izcovich, encouraging interaction at all levels within the wider Catalan theatre community. It is worth noting that all of these prominent Argentines have emerged out of the same innovative theatre movement, referred to as *el teatro de la desintegración* [theatre of disintegration]. Influenced by parodic, expressionist and absurdist traditions, the movement has been described by Pelletiere as "the most postmodern exponent of the Buenos Aires stages" (in Heredia, 2007, p20). These postmodernist aesthetics include themes such as gratuitous violence, the absence of love, social disintegration and sociolinguistic conflicts. Spregelburd suggests that the

major break with traditional Argentine forms lies with a change in the creative process, with the role of the actor becoming far more essential:

Our argument has been with our grandparents, the generation of Gamba, Tito Cosa, who invented what one calls or used to call Argentine theatre. We inherited from them the form of production. What has changed fundamentally is the definition of what is serious, what is important, and also the defining limits of the profession. Argentine actors are no longer players/ just actors, they are artists, they expect to participate in the creation of a work  
([www.alexserano.spaces.live.com/Blog/cns!328492AB114CF0E7!258.entry?sa=225958055](http://www.alexserano.spaces.live.com/Blog/cns!328492AB114CF0E7!258.entry?sa=225958055)).

Daulte's work certainly gives priority to the role of the actor in the creative process. As his work progressed he developed a playwriting technique based on creation on stage, working with actors. A key element of this technique is that the meaning of the play is only produced through the performance (Heredia, 2007). Theatre only owes loyalty to itself because theatre is reality ([www.javierdaulte.com.ar](http://www.javierdaulte.com.ar)). This approach has resulted in a seemingly easy ability to blur generic boundaries and a distinctive poetics which "is at the very least provocative" (Heredia, 2007, p22). Daulte's attitude to theatre is culturally sensitive, recognizing the importance of the local theatrical space: "the real task is to construct a history, a narration in the theatre that takes most of its cues from the theatrical context"(Daulte, 2005b, p90). It is certainly likely that an awareness of the overlapping postcolonial and postmodern realities of the Catalan cultural space may very well have been a contributing factor to his ability to function within the Barcelona theatre world.

Since 2000 his artistic contribution within Barcelona has been prolific; he has directed numerous plays, including over ten of his own. He has collaborated not only with his own Argentine theatre group but also with a wide selection of the Catalan theatre world, producing plays with theatre students, La Fura del Baus, and T de Teatre in the TNC. He has also furthered what has become known as “el procedimiento Daulte” [the Daulte method] through running a variety of courses in both alternative and public spaces, including the Sala Beckett, the Escuela Eolia and the Institut del Teatre ([www.javierdaulte.com.ar/javierdaulte.htm](http://www.javierdaulte.com.ar/javierdaulte.htm)). Daulte’s significance lies neither in his international, multiple-award winning status, nor in his ability to remain successfully active on both sides of the Atlantic, but rather in the unlikely scale of his success across the whole city theatre space. Toni Casares comments:

The arrival of Javier Daulte in Barcelona, has led, amongst other aspects, to something as healthy as the fusion in a single project of one of the more important public theatres in the city, the Teatre Lliure, an alternative venue and an off-off space. Like the Antic Teatre. There are very few people capable of pulling that off... What I mean to say is that he’s a figure who has managed to engage all the different sectors of the city (2005, p95).

Although a clear indicator of Daulte’s skill, this ability to interact at so many different levels is also a clear indicator of the permeable potential of the Barcelona theatre scene. There is a multilateral connection, as Daulte states: “I humbly believe that my work connects deeply in Barcelona” (2005b, p90). His integration within the Barcelona theatre system certainly defies the colonizing misreading of the Catalan cultural space as exclusive. Daulte’s acceptance in Barcelona has not only contributed towards his status as a successful international practitioner, but also, at a basic socio-economic level, it seems probable that Barcelona met Daulte’s professional needs at a point of social and artistic crisis in Buenos Aires. It appears to be more than mere coincidence

that Daulte begins to be active in Barcelona during the aftermath of the Argentine economic crash in 1999: Nadal suggests that the economic crisis has resulted in a clear increase in exportation of Argentine cultural artefacts (appendix 2, p84-85).

Daulte's contribution within the Catalan theatre space has challenged the (post)-colonial language binary in a number of ways. His plays have been produced with equal success in both Castilian and Catalan. Rather than claiming his constitutional right to use Castilian, as many immigrants have been prone to do (Resina, 2008), he has actively encouraged the translation of his plays into Catalan and has even premiered a number of productions, including *4D Óptico* and *Automáticos*, in the Catalan language. Rodriguez explains that "the difference lies more in the style of acting"; the Castilian versions tend to be produced with Argentine actors "who are much more practiced in using the Daulte method" and the Catalan versions are produced with Catalan actors "who are keen to try the method, but it is still new to them." However, this has not had an "impact on the size of the public" (appendix 4, p96).

In 2006 Daulte was offered the position of artistic director at the Villarroel Theatre, which has been pivotal in terms of the language debate. From the perspective of the Barcelona theatre space it demonstrates the degree of his incorporation into the system, and thereby challenges the limitations of the language binary discourse. From Daulte's perspective, it was an opportunity to challenge some of the perceived problematics of the language binary. Shortly before taking on the role he critiqued the lack of

contemporary writing in Catalan, bringing to the forefront a difficult issue that had been largely sidestepped by the politicians:

If you look at the Barcelona theatre listings for the past three seasons, you'll soon see the lack of local authors. I reckon about 90% of what's put on is by foreign authors.... I remember something similar happening in Argentina ten years or so ago... Like Argentina at that time, I think that Barcelona today still has a fatal attraction for classics and modern classics, and it doesn't look like the local repertory is considered part of these categories (Daulte, 2005a, p29).

In an interview with Marcela Topper he stated, "I am interested in living playwrights because I am one of them....local Catalan authors are my priority" (Daulte, 2006, pB5). Since taking on the role at the Villarroel, Daulte has given young Catalan playwrights, such as Jordi Casanovas and Gemma Rodriguez, the opportunity to have their work premiered in the commercial sector. Rodriguez comments that this has been an extremely important development for the city and for young Catalan theatre practitioners (appendix 4, p96). The timing of this activity was particularly significant, given the anti-Catalan backlash across Castilian-speaking Spain, following the passing of the 2006 new Catalan Statute of Autonomy (Simonis, 2008, p9).

One of Daulte's key successes in the Barcelona theatre space has been the production of the Catalan language version of his play *¿Estás ahí?* which demonstrates the way in which his work can be seen to function in Barcelona. The complex themes of language, communication and identity in the play clearly resonate within the Catalan cultural space. The reading of these themes is, however, complicated by the repeated translation process implicit in the play's trajectory. The piece first appeared in 2002, in monologue

form, entitled *Are you there?*. It was commissioned for the London theatre festival, Festival Fronteras 02, directed by Daulte and performed at the Old Vic Theatre and subsequently repeated at the Blue Elephant Theatre in 2003.

Upon his return to Buenos Aires Daulte worked alongside two actors, Héctor Díaz and Gloria Carrá (frequent collaborators with Daulte, already having participated in other Daulte plays, including *Bésame mucho*, *Faros de color* and *La escala humana*), with the intention of transforming the monologue into a far more complex play, *¿Estás Ahí?*. Although there are only two actors, the play incorporates phone conversations with an absent mother, a neighbour and an artistic producer; an invisible 'subject' and a potential new lover; alongside a young couple who are moving in together for the first time. This complexity pushes the actors into extreme uses of space and highlights the existential crises of language and communication that effectively carry the plot: the staging of absence underscores "the spatial and psychological dis-encounters on which human relationships, theatre, and even knowledge in general are constructed" ([www.paginadigital.com.ar/articulos/2004/2004prim/teatro/celcit17-2pl.asp](http://www.paginadigital.com.ar/articulos/2004/2004prim/teatro/celcit17-2pl.asp)). Although the young couple have professions that are suggestive of visual empowerment (magician and ophthalmologist), there is a tragic irony in their steady loss in ability to see one another. While both characters achieve a level of honesty in the absence of the other, direct communication seems impossible, in spite of the deep love that they share.

In Buenos Aires the play was premiered in the small Teatro Nacional Cervantes and then went on for a second run in another small theatre, the independently run Teatro

del Pueblo. Public reception on both occasions was consistently positive, with the deliberate limitation of seating capacity contributing towards an audience-orientated event that had the potential to “make the invisible visible” (Dubatti, 2005a, p79). In 2004 the Argentine production of the play performed at Girona’s theatre festival Tempoada Alta. With Toni Casares’ agreement to work on a Catalan translation of the play, it was arranged for the Catalan version, *Ets aquí?* to be premiered at the Teatre Romea in January 2005. Casares’ support re-emphasises the role played by the Sala Beckett in Daulte’s road to success in Barcelona. Following Daulte’s method of working, with the idea that meaning is produced through the performative process, the translation process was not entirely text-based: “the translation was produced simultaneously as the actors rehearsed on stage” (Casares, 2005, p95). The need to emphasize this production process was heightened, not only by the change in the cultural space, but also by the change in the type of theatre space; two well known television-based actors, Clara Segura and Joel Joan were to perform in the large commercial Romea theatre.

As with any theatre production, the choice of performance site is extremely significant. Michael Hays explains:

It is in fact the choice of location which first announces the conceptual as well as the spatial structure of the theatre event, since the position, size, and shape of the place determine the physical and perceptual relationships between the participants as well as their number. Temporally, visually, and conceptually, the theatre itself provides us with an initial glimpse of the way in which the lived experience of the performance is organized as a structural whole. And it is also this theatre space which first allows us to propose a connection between the

ordering principles of the theatre event and those of society at large (in Bennett, 199, p128).

The Romea is particularly important from the perspective of postcolonial Catalan identity, because it is the mythical emblem of authentic Catalan theatre. Daulte's admittance into the Romea is therefore illustrative of his acceptance as an 'other' Catalan writer. Fortier writes that "with its need of a public place, for physical resources, workers and an audience, theatre is more complexly and more intimately entwined with the outside world than many literary and other artistic activities" (2002, p152). The physical location of the Romea Theatre in its relation to this outside world, very much takes on the multiple discourses of a (post)colonial, postmodern space. Opened in the nineteenth century in a predominantly middle class, Catalan-language speaking part of the city, as a cultural statement proclaiming the importance of Catalan-language theatre, the twenty-first century Romea confronts a changing urban reality, surrounded by densely populated immigrant districts. The entrance to the theatre stands as a symbol of the confrontation between past and present. Once inside the theatre, the ambivalent postmodern 'other' image of the city disappears, the luxurious modernist architecture a semi-denial of its existence. Moreover, the theatre has played an important role in the post-Franco language normalization project, becoming the *Centro Dramático de la Generalitat* [Dramatic Centre of the Generalitat] in 1981, and playing the role of a Catalan National Theatre, until the construction and opening of the present day National in 1996. Although the Romea continues to be supported by the Generalitat, the theatre image has changed significantly with the change in ownership to the commercial theatre group, *Focus*. Under the artistic direction of Calixto Bieito, the theatre has stated its intention to not only provide entertainment, but also to be

“transgressive, provocative and reflexive” ([www.teatreromea.com/e/fromea.aspx](http://www.teatreromea.com/e/fromea.aspx)), while retaining an aspiration to stage a specifically Catalan theatre (Delgado, 2003). This is particularly evident in the Catalan-language bias of the *Fundació Romea* [Romea Foundation], which seeks to “promote theatre and become an instrument of intervention and debate” (<http://www.fundaciromea.com/index>). Yet, Daulte, who can be seen to represent this ‘other’ image of the city, was given access to this specifically Catalan theatre space, demonstrating that despite the ongoing conflict discourses, the theatre space and perhaps also Catalan identity, is less exclusive than has been suggested. *Ets aquí?* was coproduced between the Romea and Vania Produccions. Also receiving Catalan government support, Vania works on incorporating global elements into the Catalan language market ([www.vania.es/](http://www.vania.es/)), actively helping Daulte to make the transition to the Catalan-language scene.

The commercial stance of the Romea has also led to a questioning of Daulte’s commitment to alternative theatre. However, Daulte denies that the commercial factor lies at the heart of the city’s acceptance of his work. He asks, “What does it mean to make commercial theatre? I have no prejudices: I’m as happy to work in a basement [...] One issue that worries me is the question of who theatre is for. I’ve answered that question: theatre is for anyone and everyone. The fact that *¿Estás ahí?* turned out to be a work with commercial potential is a complete and unexpected coincidence” (Daulte, 2005b, p88-89). The changes made to the production are seen to respond less to the commercial and more to the local, cultural aspect: Argentine academic Dubatti, having seen both versions, confirms the successful transition into the Catalan space: “it works as well as in Buenos Aires but with some differential traits” (2005b, p88). Daulte also

comments on the Catalan version: “You see there are very subtle changes, which respond to local issues... I had to take on board these other aspects, seeing how this improved my work” (Daulte, 2005b, p89).

Although Daulte clearly sees the need to make these cultural shifts, he also recognises the postmodern ambiguity inherent in his plays to be an important contributor to their transnational potential: “I worked from the beginning [with *¿Estás aquí?*] with a non-contextualised work, which isn’t full of Argentine elements... it’s not a very localist piece, or at least its localization allows it to be universalised” (Daulte, 2005b, p87). Meaning is produced locally through the performance and also by the audience: as a postmodernist theatre practitioner, Daulte sees the ultimate meaning of his plays to be an audience construct. There is no universal meaning to his work, but rather the multiple, random fragments of the play take shape through performance to be experienced and completed by the spectator who is “able to productively read multiple meanings through a mindset that has internalized multiplicity and contradictions” (Malkin, 1999, p19). In discussing the postmodern performance aesthetic, Denzin states that “the postmodern audience is both an interactive structure and an interpretive vehicle. Audience members are citizens from the local community, performers who bring their own interpretive frameworks to a performance event” (2003, p41). Bennett also affirms that “a performance can activate a diversity of responses, but it is the audience which finally ascribes meaning and usefulness to any cultural product” (1997, p156). Daulte is therefore aware that the different cultural contexts in London, Buenos Aires and Barcelona must result in distinctive audience responses that reflect the specific location. The audience, within the cultural setting, also act upon one another in the construction

of meaning: “when spectators come together they constitute a sign system for both performers and other audience members. That is, each spectator serves as a signifier for performers and other spectators to read” (Whitmore, 1994, p56). Both individual and group response to Daulte’s work allows it to interact within each context. Magnarelli discusses *¿Estas ahí?*:

“It can also be interpreted on a number of different levels: the personal, the philosophical, and the theatrical, amongst others... His aim is perhaps always that of awakening consciousness although not in the traditional sense... Daulte also leaves open the reception of his works and this depends to a great extent on the audience, on the individual spectator, unique and unrepeatable. Thus the ‘truths’ put forward by his works are always relative, changeable, and subject to various readings and personal interpretation” (2007, p200).

Within the Catalan context a number of key themes in the play, such as invisibility, language, identity and otherness, allow the local audience to attribute local meaning. The theme of invisibility in the play can be read from a local perspective in both postmodernist and (post)colonial terms. Rosaldo suggests that the postmodernist practice of “using the detached observer to make ourselves invisible to ourselves has been debilitating” (1993, p198). The ambivalence of the postmodern subject position becomes even more problematic when combined with (post)colonial identity issues. Martí’s invisible presence can therefore be read as a reflection of the uncomfortable loss of subjectivity within the postmodern context as well as a reification of the invisibility of the colonial subject. Issues of global domination implicate the invisibility of the postmodern subject:

within postmodern culture, domination occurs less through legal-rational legitimation, but rather through what Zygmunt Bauman identifies as seduction and repression. Seduction occurs when the capitalist marketplace makes consumers dependent on it. Repression means 'panoptical' power -surveillance employed at the regimentation of the body which is diffused (made invisible) by the institutionalization of knowledge-based experience (McLaren, 1995, p182)

McLaren goes on to comment that within the postmodern context this repression also “occurs in the service of keeping colonialist metanarratives invisible, perpetuating a form of political amnesia (p182).

Invisibility as a theoretical construct can also be strongly related to the question of language usage. Postmodern fragmentation of language augments the (post)colonial language crisis, where the importance of dialogue is an essential aspect in the struggle of the oppressed to become subjects (p171). Gilbert and Tompkins note that “there are at least three 'silences' that are expressively deployed on the postcolonial stage: inaudibility, muteness and refusals to speak” (in Talib, 2002, p96). Martí’s muteness and later Anna’s inaudibility can be seen as examples of what Spivak terms “the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject” (Britton, 1999, p37). Muteness is also linked to the alienation from the body, where self-expression is difficult to envision. Martí and Anna’s shades of invisibility reflect the anxiety and fear of oblivion that is inscribed upon the (post)colonial body. Anna’s fear of being forgotten is covered up by the excuses that she finds to explain Cesc’s inability to see or hear her, which can be seen to reflect the ambivalent relationship between colonizer and colonized: “No és que no vulgui mirar-me; no em veu, que és diferent (...) Bé, li costa” [It’s not that he doesn’t

want to see me. He doesn't see me, which is different (...) The thing is, it's difficult for him] (Daulte, 2005c, p137).

In discussing (post)colonial muteness Britton suggests that "the subaltern subject's inability to speak is a theoretical metaphor for a social position; it is not the *literal* silence" (1999, p37). In fact "silence in the form of physical muteness [...] can be both a result of colonialism and a strategic response to its linguistic hierarchies. ...very few colonial subjects are *incapable* of speech; most are denied the *opportunity* to speak or choose silence to avoid interpellation into the dominant discourse" (Gilbert and Tompkins, 1996, p191). In the Catalan context the symbolic violence of the Spanish state, which misreads the Catalan language as a dominating force, is further problematized by the weakness of Catalan as a minority language in a postmodern global-consumerist market, where Spanish is a language of power. The language-identity choices are limited; in order to make yourself heard one must speak Spanish but in speaking Spanish one would be submitting to the dominant colonial discourse and would thereby effectively reduce the visibility of one's Catalan identity. Speaking Catalan could result in a semi-visible position like Anna's and the decision not to talk at all would most likely result in remaining like Martí, an invisible, mute and frustrated subject. The audience knows Martí has a voice, because this voice is heard once in the play, but far from an empowering voice, it is a voice of despair; "se sent un gemec de queixa" [a moaning cry of complaint is heard](Daulte, 2005c, p122). Martí's lack of language is therefore "experienced as a lack of being; in other words, not having a language that adequately, immediately and fully expresses what one wishes to say about the world and, perhaps particularly, about oneself, becomes equated with not

having a fully realized self” (Britton, 1999, p180). Silence may be a symbolic tool “against the colonial (in)justice system” (Talib, 2002, p96), but it is not necessarily a successful one.

The problematic of colonial muteness can also be read in a subtle difference between the two play scripts. The Catalan text is far more obviously marked by silence between phrases. In the opening of the play, for example, the stage direction “silenci” [silence] is inserted thirteen times, (Daulte, 2005c, pp115-116), as opposed to a mere three times in the same opening section of the Spanish text (Daulte, 2007, p209). Through emphasizing the disjointed nature of the seemingly one-way dialogue, the Catalan version of the play can be seen to be placing a greater emphasis on the (post)colonial language crisis and the lack of an interlocutor for the minority colonized language.

Martí’s self-erasure can also be read by a Barcelona audience as a symptom of rejection of the colonial self, in preference for the foreign. The Catalan obsession with internationalization can be seen as a facet of the colonial identity crisis in the postmodern context (Crameri, 2008). This relates directly to Daulte’s role in the Catalan space: while his incorporation into the Barcelona theatre world demonstrates the shared nature of the Catalan theatre space, it can also be read to some degree as a problematic of this same space. The fact that Daulte’s reception far exceeds the reception of home grown Catalan language playwrights of the same generation, such as Batlle, suggests the extent of the ongoing colonial identity crisis. However, as Lionnet points out, “it is precisely those 'zones of cultural invisibility' that pose the most

compelling questions for contemporary critics and theorists because that is where the transcultural process, through appropriation and contestation, manifests itself with clarity”( 1995, pp74-75).

A further complexity of the invisibility theme can be perceived in Anna’s immigrant status, which allows her to be constructed as ‘other’. Even though she is a second-generation immigrant Cesc blames cultural difference for some of their communicative issues. She is incapable of seeing his perspective because “És italiana [...] de Càlabria” [she is Italian, from Calabria] (Daulte 2005c, p116). This resonates strongly in Barcelona, where issues of visibility, language, communication and culture are very much part of the immigration problematic. On the one hand, the vast percentage of Castilian-speaking Latin American immigrants contributes towards the growing invisibility of the Catalan language in the city. On the other hand, the individual immigrant remains in a weak position, socially and politically, an invisible and anonymous figure in the global magna of the capitalist system. Once she arrives on stage for the first time, her visibility is reduced and her otherness is heightened because she is dead. The sharing of space between live and dead subjects has the potential to be read as a challenge of the largely colonially-enforced life-death spatiality:

Europeans attempted to impose on themselves (and on the people they colonized) a revolutionary spatial paradigm: the segregation of the dead from the living [...] the cemetery grows on the margins to define the social distinction of the fictive center: the dead will dwell in separate houses suitable to their status [...] if the dead are forever segregated, how are the living supposed to remember who they are? (Roach, 1996, pp48-55).

Cesc appears to be more comfortable with having the dead close at hand, rather than confined to the cemetery. He states “no hi vull anar, al cementiri... No m’agraden els cementiris [I don’t want to go to the cemetery... I don’t like cemeteries]. Having Anna close by means that it is easier to remember, “No, no m’he oblidat d’ella” [No, no I haven’t forgotten her] (Daulte, 2005c, p136). Perhaps the provocative staging of death in *Est aquí?* may allow a Catalan audience to re-enact a shared memory, both real and imaginary.

The reading of Martí as ‘other’ is perhaps one of the more likely readings a Catalan audience might make of the play. Particularly in the first act, the desire to communicate with Martí can be read as a colonial fascination with the ‘other’. Cesc’s mother, despite her refusal to visit her son and Anna, based on the fact that they live on the fourth floor and there is no lift, is quick to change her mind once she hears about Martí’s ‘presence’. Cesc comments bitterly; “Ah, per això sí que pots pujar els quatre pisos, oi?” [So you don’t mind climbing four flights of stairs for that then?] (Daulte, 2005c, p123). Chow interrelates the colonizing desire with the frustration of an unrewarding postmodern existence: “Our fascination with the native, the oppressed [...] is therefore a desire to hold onto an unchanging certainty somewhere outside our own fake experience” (1993, p53). Perhaps through her own multiple frustrations, Anna develops a fascination with Martí motivated out of self-gain, that can be read as a colonial desire to hold and control. The desire is so great that Cesc fears that it may totally consume her; “A mí em preocupa més l’Anna [...] em sembla excessiu aquest entusiasme” [I’m particularly worried about Anna [...] her enthusiasm (for Martí) seems to be excessive] (p124). Young states that “colonization begins and perpetuates itself through acts of violence, and calls forth an

answering violence from the colonized” (1995, p173). A (post)colonial audience response to the play could interpret Martí’s chaotic behaviour, that breaks out on occasion into violence, as the frustrated response of an oppressed colonial subject.

The problematics expressed by invisibility within the context of a postmodern, (post)colonial cultural space, are multiplied by the anxious uncertainties of a postmodern existence. Bauman opens *Liquid Modernity* with a Valéry quote:

Interruption, incoherence, surprise are the ordinary conditions of our life. They have become real needs for many people, whose minds are no longer fed...by anything but sudden changes and constantly renewed stimuli...We can no longer bear anything that lasts. We no longer know how to make boredom bear fruit.

So the whole question comes down to this: can the human mind master what the human mind has made? (2000, p1).

The dilemma of this ever-changing, uprooted and ambivalent postmodern life is very much a precondition of living in contemporary Barcelona. The city audience would be very likely to detect symbols of the postmodern life throughout *Ets aquí?*. The opening scene reveals the chaos of unpacked boxes and a sense of uncertainty, of unwillingness to set about claiming the space. Bauman uses a liquid metaphor to distinguish the ‘post’-modern ‘liquid’ period from the modern ‘solid’ period. The contemporary modern is required to take on the fluid quality of liquid in order to face the liquidizing powers of a melting pot society: “liquids unlike solids cannot easily hold their shape [...] Fluids, so to speak, neither fix space nor bind time [...] fluids do not keep to any space for long and are constantly ready (and prone) to change; and so for them it is the flow of time that

counts, more than the space they happen to occupy, that space, after all, they fill, but for a moment” (2000, p2). The liquid dimension of Cesc’s existence is highlighted by the revelation that he has moved house five times in the last two years: “Sap?En els últims dos anys m’he canviat de casa quatre...no; cinc vegades...” [You know? In the last two years I’ve moved house four...no; five times] (Daulte, 2005c, p117). This aspect of a postmodern existence has particular local resonance in globalized Barcelona, where it is becoming almost impossible for young people to find a permanent space to occupy. Cesc, within this context, can be seen as a liminal figure, located in permanent crisis, looking for help and meaning that he cannot find: he phones his mother, “T’he trucat perquè estic molt angoixat” [I phoned you because I’m very distressed]. Yet rather than offer him any support his mother makes the situation more difficult for him by miscommunicating the situation to Anna: Anna comments “m’ha trucat la teva mare i m’ho ha explicat. I m’he posat feta una fúria. M’he emprenyat tant que he perdut el control del cotxe” [Your mum phoned me and told me. I became furious. I was so angry that I lost control of the car] (p221).

The liquid modern works anxiously to overcome its condition, caught up in the impossibility of two irreconcilable needs, security and freedom. There is a search for security implicit in the ironic avoidance of constructing meaning through language. Caught in a never-ending muddle of messages Bauman suggests that “we belong to the even flow of words and unfinished sentences (abbreviated, to be sure, truncated to speed up the circulation). We belong to talking, not to what is talked about [...] Stop talking - and you are out. Silence equals exclusion” (2003, pp34-35). The audience can see this reflected in the play through the constant tension between the characters’

inability to communicate and the simultaneous constant struggle to overcome silence. For example, Cesc's unsuccessful attempts to communicate with Martí in the first act of the play are interspersed with frequent phone calls. Even though these phone calls highlight his multiple communication problems, they enable him to maintain a constant stream of chatter that helps to block out the silence caused by Martí's muteness. They also help to disguise both Cesc's basic 'alone'-ness and the frail nature of his fabricated security. This postmodern isolation is exemplified by the title of the play, 'are you there?': "at a personal/interpersonal level it is necessary to recognise that the question of the title is the fundamental question, however painful, in any human relationship... the answer, of course, is no" (Magnarelli, 2007, p200).

The liquid metaphor can also be read in the play through the role played by Martí, both through the seemingly fluid, ephemeral nature of his physicality, and through his clear obsession with water. Badiou, one of Daulte's key influences, writes in some detail on the concepts of naturalness, truth and fallacy in the postmodern theatre world (Heredia, 2007, pp17-18). In discussing Badiou's ideas on theatre in the postmodern context, Gibson writes: "the ethical insistence of theatre is that no difference is natural. In particular, according to *Rhapsodie pour le théâtre*<sup>1</sup>, theatre articulates the substantial emptiness of the notion of sexual difference" (2007, p232). The complete ambiguity surrounding Martí's identity; his form, sex and reasoning, is typical of Daulte's technique in blurring generic boundaries and binaries. Martí's chaotic, disruptive actions throughout the play can be read as a symbol of a chaotic, disruptive postmodern

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<sup>1</sup>Badiou's series of essays on the art of theatre, published in 1990 (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale).

life, where there is a constant stream of questions and challenges, but few, if any, answers.

Martí and Anna's invisibility results in the adoption of visual aids to help with the communicative process. Within the Catalan context this opens up the text versus visual debate that has prevailed in the theatre space since the 1970s. The performance groups that emerged out of the independent theatre movement developed a more visual form in order to escape from Francoist language restrictions. In the early post-1975 era the visual form continued to thrive, even though the political focus dwindled away. A new wave of performance groups surfaced, producing "a theatre embedded in a bold visual aesthetic" (Saumell, 2007, p337), which became the defining characteristic of contemporary Catalan theatre; even as Catalan textual theatre began to fully re-emerge in the 1990s. Crameri notes that groups such as *Els Joglars*, *Comediants* and *La Fura dels Baus* "have come to represent what is innovative and distinctive about theatre in Barcelona" (2008, p94). The pressures of the global market, and the preference for grand spectacle, have encouraged this trend to continue into the twenty-first century. Despite colonizing misrepresentations of Catalan language normalization, the lack of prioritization of Catalan textual theatre reveals the deep complexity of the colonial language issue.

In *Ets aquí?* the postmodern preference for the visual is recognizable, as Martí's use of the magic doodle board blurs the distinction between word and image:

Quina lletra tan curiosa... No s'entén gaire bé. Son lletres o dibuixos. Sembla que són dibuixos, oi? Està be, ens podem entendre fent dibuixos. [...] és curios com ens agrada, a nosaltres, a les persones, això de jugar a fer dibuixos per entendre'ns els uns amb els altres, com si fóssim els homes primitius; ho dic pels jocs aquests que hi ha, el Pictionary...

[What curious writing... It's not easy to understand. Are they letters or pictures? They appear to be pictures don't they? That's fine. We can use pictures as a way to understand one another [...] it's curious how we, human beings that is, play at drawing pictures in order to make ourselves understood, as if we were primitive men. I'm referring to the various games out there, Pictionary...] (Daulte 2005c, p120).

The focus on the visual is linked to the logics of the anglicised, global consumer market where there is a greater reliance on non-verbal forms of language communication. The image takes on hybrid multiplicity: Cesc comments on Martí's writing: "he pensat que devia ser el seu nom, Martí, Però podia ser qualsevol cosa" [I thought that it was his name, Martí. But it could have been simply anything] (p121). This can be read as a reflection of the way that the colonized Catalan language has gradually lost its distinction, becoming more hybridized, particularly in the vortex of the city. In commenting on the play *Dubatti* suggests that Cesc's visual efforts to see an alternative reality offer a performative way to overcome the language crisis:

to strain one's eyes, to force a new inflection on the gaze that is different from what is natural, this is the secret to transcend the density of immediate linguistic reality and see that which is behind it, that which apparently slips away between the nets of language. The theatre becomes the tool with which to perceive those zones where reality is amplified and allows one to see that which reality resists showing (2005a, p80).

The essential reality that a Catalan audience may perceive in the play is the fundamental crisis of identity that pervades the Catalan cultural space. Heredia suggests that Daulte's plays have a social-political statement to make: "his most recurrent themes and procedures present a notable correspondence with the social context and the crisis of values suffered by argentine society in the 1990s... that of a society for which communication was impossible, and identity a vain proposition" (2007, p21). As each character in *Ets aquí?* struggles to communicate, to find identity and meaning, s/he sinks into a liminal no-man's-land. Within the Catalan context, the layering of postmodern and (post)colonial factors effectively doubles the communication and identity crises. Earnshaw suggests that "the search to find a way of living in the midst of an unjust heritage does not mean that a home in a postmodern fluid subjectivity is the easy option...The conflict between the movement of the postmodern and the identity crisis of the postcolonial, entails a confrontation between the two" (1997, pxxi). Identity becomes dispersed into a schizophrenic hybridity: Paolini states that multiple identity constitutes the postcolonial experience in the postmodern world and he goes on to explain that "the move toward multiple realities has its antecedents in notions about cultural difference in postcolonialism and more general postmodern reworkings of identity in social theory" (1999, p108).

The Barcelona audience would be able to read the Catalan hybrid identity crisis in the play in a number of key ways. Firstly, the problematic (post)colonial interrelation of language with identity can be seen to be reflected in the language crisis experienced by each of the characters. The opening of Act One interlinks the postmodern liquid identity crisis with the language identity crisis, as Cesc, surrounded by unopened boxes,

struggles desperately to use language both to seek to communicate and to define himself. The opening line is a stream of anxious, unanswered questions: “Què? Perdó? Com diu? Ha parlat, oi? Ha dit alguna cosa?” [What? Sorry? What did you say? Did you say something?] (Daulte, 2005c, p115). The inability to express oneself and one's identity through language is emphasized repeatedly through constant misunderstandings. For example, in Cesc's first phone conversation with Anna he states “No t'entenc” [I don't understand you] (p117). The language-identity metaphor can also be read in a wider sense, in the suggestion at the crash scene that it is impossible to make oneself heard and to make oneself known through words; “deien coses que no s'entenien” [you couldn't understand what they were saying] (p126). This confusion puts so much pressure on Anna that her language-identity is totally disempowered: “Jo no podia ni parlar” [I couldn't say anything at all] (p126). This disempowerment leads to the invisibility of both the colonized body and the colonized language, as discussed above.

Another Catalan identity crisis, the concept of identity as resistance, can also be read in *Ets aquí?* through Martí's muteness and chaotic, violent behaviour. Ashcroft states that the question of resistance is essential in the decolonization process because “the concept of resistance has always dwelt at the heart of the struggle between imperial power and post-colonial identity” (2001b, p14). Postcolonial critic Thiong'o goes as far as to suggest that “postcolonial identity is synonymous with resistance” (in Jefferess, 2008, p80). However, resistance as identity for the Catalan nation has been extremely problematic. The obligatory ‘pact of silence’ that came as a precondition of democracy sought to neutralize the past and create an imaginary blame-free national

consciousness (Wright, 2007). The pretence that colonization was a myth was also very effective in neutralizing the Catalan resistant strand that had developed during the Franco dictatorship. Throughout the democracy period the Catalan normalization project has failed to create a Catalan 'norm', and Catalans continue to ask what normal is and what being Catalan might mean (Crameri, 2008).

Following the car crash Anna, as a voiceless subject, experiences her deepest crisis of identity and she questions who she is: "Potser el que m'ha passat és que m'he fet moltes preguntes. T'has fet alguna vegada moltes preguntes, tu? Però preguntes de veritat, vull dir; qui ets, què vols, per exemple?" [Perhaps what happened is that I asked myself a lot of questions. Have you ever asked yourself a lot of questions? I mean, real questions; who you are, what you want, for example?] (Daulte, 2005c, p127). In 2003 Albert Pla wrote an article in the Catalan-language newspaper *Avui* entitled "Linguistic normalization: A fiction that we want to believe in", questioning the legitimacy of Catalan identity (Pla, 2003, p18). In his book, *El malestar en la cultura catalana*, Josep-Anton Fernandez explores the concept of normalization as a myth that must be demolished, in order for Catalans to be able to construct a healthy identity (2008).

Nonetheless the symbolic violence of the state has constructed the Catalan identity as a resistance-identity, a straightforward oppositionality to the Spanish state. In this manner, the State has effectively locked Catalan identity into a binary, used to define it as 'other' (Ashcroft, 2001b, p14). The power of the state to 'name' the Catalan 'other' reduces the Catalan colonized subject, like Martí, to "part-objects of presence"

(McLaren, 1995, p173). Martí's attempts at resistance, his visual communication, his violent behaviour, are constructed as barbaric; "Déu meu, quina barbaritat" [My God, what barbarity](Daulte, 2005c, p122). McLaren describes this type of colonial behaviour as "a colonial violence which becomes universalized and naturalized as a form of natural law" (1995, p173). He goes on to suggest that this colonial violence becomes even harder to resist within the context of a postmodern space where "there exists a widespread sanctioned inarticulateness about the workings of everyday power/knowledge relations" (p179). This is reflected in the "colonizing forces of globalization that erases group thought and memory and swallows culture" (p173). Within the postmodern setting the Spanish State problematize Catalan resistance-based identity still further by constructing Catalan identity as a fixed outdated identity, unsuited to survive in the fluid postmodern context. The legitimate construct of State identity therefore portrays the Catalan component as superfluous.

The problematics of hybrid identity in (post)colonial, postmodern Barcelona can be read in the play through Anna's 'incorporation' of Renata. The crisis of hybrid identity in this scene can be ascertained through the violent struggle and through the total elimination of Renata's identity. In order to make herself both seen and heard Martí teaches Anna how to take over Renata's body, which involves both a physical and a mental struggle (Daulte, 2005c, pp142-143). However, the resulting hybrid identity is as destructive for Anna as it is for Renata, because she appears to Cesc as Renata and cannot therefore be true to her own identity. This results in total communication breakdown: "*Es queda sense paraules. Silenci [...] es queda callada. Silenci*" [ She is left speechless. Silence [ ...] she remains speechless. Silence] (p145). Following the reversal

of the incorporation Renata is left dazed and confused, with a feeling of not belonging in the space; “On sóc? Qui ets, tu? Què ha passat? Què m’han fet? Què m’has fet? Me’n vull anar” [Where am I? Who are you? What happened? What did they do to me? What did you do to me? I want to leave] (p152). Paolini writes that “hybridity swells from a specific colonial situation to become paradigmatic of all oppositional theory and politics...there is a slippage between the theoretical insights of the postmodern and postcolonial perspective and the particular social, historical context in which hybrid relations are taking place...it is the triumph of the sign of hybridity rather than its various and multiple significations” (1999, p100). Resina notes the effects of this hybridity upon the Barcelona space: “the city has irrevocably lost its Catalan identity through enforcement of a hybrid identity designed for a fragmented population that is loosely unified through consumption of the city’s image (2008, p204).

Daulte and Casares, in the translation process appear to have made an effort to reinscribe the city identity into the play. There are quite a number of geographically-specific referents that help the audience to locate the flat within the city landscape. The play is also localised through the active inclusion of the BTV at the scene of the crash (Daulte, 2005c, p126). This is perhaps a reflection of Casares’ evident desire to overcome the Catalan identity crisis through reinstating Barcelona identity in the context of Barcelona theatre. Just before the *Ets aquí?* project, in the 2003-2004 theatre season, he was responsible for “L’acció té lloc a Barcelona”, an initiative that encouraged a variety of dramatists to “create a theatrical imaginary grounded in visions of the city. The series, conceived at a time in which ‘Barcelona’ , as a concept, trope, image, or theme, had nearly vanished from the Catalan stage, earned Casares and the

Sala Beckett a prestigious Generalitat de Catalunya prize..in 2005” (Feldman, 2007, p372)

Daulte suggests that the reason *Ets aquí?* is so successful in Barcelona is because “meaning is not enclosed in the performance or the play, but that it is given over so that meaning comes about from the reading that the spectator makes or might make of it” (Daulte, 2005b, 91). The performative response to the play is therefore seen to be “more anchored in the personal and individual representations than in a shared collective sociohistorical imaginary” (Dubatti, 2005a, p82). While the postmodernist aesthetic in the play allows the meaning to be constructed by the Barcelona audience, it is possible that Daulte underestimates or even misreads the political impact of the play within the Barcelona context, where the play resonates on such a personal level because identity within (post)colonial, postmodern Catalonia can in no way be taken for granted as a given construct.

There is however, a positive message that the Catalan audience can take away with them from the play. Susan Bennett states that “both an audience’s reaction to a text (or performance) and the text (performance) itself are bound within cultural limits. Yet, as diachronic analysis makes apparent, those limits are continually tested and invariably broken. Culture cannot be held as a fixed entity, a set of constant rules, but instead it must be seen as in a position of inevitable flux” (Bennett, 1990, p101).

The theatre space offers the (post)colonial, postmodern audience a space to “interrogate specific political and social processes [...] A cultural politics is at work. This politics enacts a performance of possibilities, a performance that directs citizens down a path of collective action and social change” (Denzin, 2003, p41). As Anna and Martí decide to leave the flat at the end of *Ets aquí?* the audience can detect a possibility of moving on; Anna states “Vull dir que s’ha de tirar endavant” [I mean to say, you have to keep moving forwards] (Daulte, 2005c, p145). This gives Cesc the opportunity to recover from the past; “necessito que tot això s’acabi, passar a una altra cosa” [I need all of this to end, to move on to something else] (p147).

In order for Catalans to make this positive move forwards, it is possible that a flexible approach to hybrid forms may be required, made through the positive intersections of cultural forms in the cultural space “where distinct processes crisscross from within and beyond its border” (Roach, 1996, p29). This approach to hybridity resists colonial dominance, “the transformational value of change lies in the re-articulation, or translation, of elements that are neither the One [...] nor the Other [...] but something else besides which contests the terms and territories of both”(Bhabha, 1994, p41). A move towards this type of hybrid permeability can already be detected in the Barcelona theatre space, as demonstrated through Daulte’s transnational connection with this space. Thus, “despite the difficulties and the obvious differences, [...] it is impossible to separate the broad, variegated and exhilarating world of contemporary Catalan theatre and performance into neat, separate compartments. One of its most salient characteristics [is] its hybrid nature” (Delgado et al., 2007, p277).

## Conclusion

The vast development of Catalan theatre over the last four decades has made theatre “one of Catalonia’s most successful cultural forms” (Cramer, 2008, p930). In fact, Catalonia today is “the main source of theatrical production in Spain, due to the quality of its actors, actresses, directors and technicians. And also due to its audience, which has grown [and] Barcelona is a focal point for theatre in Catalonia” (Ordóñez, 2007, p476). Jordi Coca, Catalan theatre practitioner, and professor, believes that “from an external point of view, the situation is the best we have ever had [...] more money than ever, more infrastructures, bigger audiences” (2007, p452). This study has contextualized and investigated the complex problematics of the space that are blurred by this outside global perspective. In order to reach this point, the Catalan theatre space has had to deal with the many difficult issues that constitute the Catalan (post)colonial, postmodern identity crisis. The ongoing colonial tension with the State is articulated by Catalan theatre director Lluís Pasqual, who having spent time working in both Madrid and Barcelona comments: “Unfortunately I don’t think we can speak of a dialogue between Madrid and Barcelona, neither in a cultural context nor in any other context” (Pasqual, 2007, p472).

Working through the complexities of interlinked language, culture and identity politics in the post-1975 years, the theatre space was also required to find its place within the conflicting political discourses centred on the implementation of normalization policies. The question of Catalan-language prioritization was further complicated by the rise of

the visual performance group, and the seemingly easy exportation of this style. However, the concept of the liminal theatre space allowed Catalan theatre to remain largely varied and permeable, despite the pressures of institutionalization and Castilian-based market forces. Alternative theatre groups such as the Sala Beckett have played a particularly vital role in the maintenance of this liminal space, encouraging the return of the local Catalan-language playwright and helping forge positive international links. With the increasing postmodern pressures of the global market, Catalan theatre festivals have worked alongside alternative theatre spaces, helping to enrich the theatre space through offering a space to local practitioners, as well as to innovative practitioners from around the world.

Criticism that chooses to focus on the language divide has therefore been unable to account for the successful consolidation of international theatre relations. The incorporation of Javier Daulte into the Catalan theatre space has been particularly emblematic, not only of Barcelona's relationship with Buenos Aires, but also with international theatre movements as a whole. The postmodernist aesthetics of Daulte's work have played a key role in enabling him to move smoothly across cultural barriers. By working to convert the theatre space into "a zone of essential uncertainty" (Heredia, 2007, p23), Daulte has found a connection with the Catalan cultural space, troubled as it is by the deep uncertainty of its own identity. His reproduction of identity-related sociolinguistic conflicts, as exemplified in *Ets aquí?*, can be seen in particular to have contributed towards his successful reception within Barcelona (Pellettieri, 2004, p200), allowing him to bring together in a clear project theatre families or dynamics as different as an official theatre, alternative theatre and the really fringe spaces of the

city” (Casares, 2005, p95). Daulte’s success has therefore pulled against the State-led discourse that the Catalan cultural space is exclusive. It has revealed multiple spaces of encounter within the theatre space in the city, and his collaboration with local practitioners has allowed local meanings to sediment in his work.

However, the connection with Daulte has also revealed the ongoing limitations and problematics of the theatre space, caused by the anxieties of the ongoing (post)colonial, postmodern identity crisis: the “ever-deeper social segmentation and cultural heterogeneity, and consequentially an ever-vaguer sense of identity as the ultimate ground of sociality” (Resina, 2008, p201). His success is partly symptomatic of an obsession with internationalization that can be read as a semi-rejection of the colonial self, seen within the theatre space by the ongoing difficulties experienced by local Catalan-language playwrights. Simultaneously, Daulte’s presence has ironically gone some way towards correcting this imbalance through his prioritization of the local practitioner at the Villarroel theatre. In order for the Catalan space to move on from the darkness of the colonial past and ambiguities of the (post)colonial present, it must simultaneously see identity in the postmodern context as a fluid process of change, but also re-discover “a preferential option for a view of the oppressed” (Paolini, 1999, p100). The Catalan theatre space has gone some way already to achieving this objective, but there is still some way to go. In the words, of Calixto Bieito, artistic director of the Romea Theatre: “We’re still on a journey, still searching. Catalonia is a nation where theatre has grown massively during the last thirty years but there is still much to be done” (2007, p474).

The following appendices are interviews conducted by Anna E. Wilson with four theatre practitioners who were taking part in the Sala Beckett's Obrador Summer Workshop 2009. The interviews were conducted at the Obrador, 4<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> July 2009.

[The appendices are not available in the digital copy of the thesis]

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