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The Linguistic Landscapes of Contemporary Catalan Theatre (2008-2021)

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Abstract

The concept of linguistic landscape emerged from ethno- and sociolinguistics to refer to the visibility of the diverse languages that co-exist in a defined territory and the necessity to map the changing relationship between them. Within the field of Translation Studies, it has been combined with ecocritical approaches to rethink the complex connections between languages, cultures, and territories, always recognising the vulnerability of minority languages in the context of globalization. In this initial contribution, I want to explore the changes in the linguistic landscapes of contemporary Catalan theatre, linking them to the triple crisis — socioeconomic, political, and environmental — which has been experienced with particular intensity between 2008 and 2021. I will look at three aspects of these ecolinguistic changes: 1. The presence and visibility of plurilingual dramaturgies; 2. The treatment and recovery of invisible or marginal figures from Catalan theatrical tradition (above all as relates to dialectal diversity); 3. The role of translation from other traditions (especially as regards the representation of linguistic conflict and minority cultural identities).

Keywords: multilingualism, plurilingualism, ecolinguistics, eco-translation, linguistic landscapes, contemporary Catalan theatre

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ESTUDIS ESCÈNICS 47

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The Linguistic Landscapes of Contemporary Catalan Theatre (2008-2021)

Introduction: A Plurilingual Theatre Landscape?

One of the most visible changes in the Catalan theatre landscape between 2008 and 2021 has been its increasing plurilingualism. Institutions that previously dedicated much of their programming to Catalan-language productions, most notably the Teatre Romea, Teatre Lliure and Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, now routinely include productions in other languages, primarily Spanish. The commercial theatres whose posters are layered on the publicity boards and bollards across the centre of Barcelona are basically characterised by Spanish or Catalan translations of international commercial successes, alongside the kind of heritage topoi — from flamenco to Gaudí — designed to attract tourists, which often makes it difficult without closer inspection to know the language in which the show will be presented:



Figure 1. An example of theatre publicity on Barcelona's Rambla, October 2021.

Even the numerous smaller alternative spaces that emerged against a backdrop of economic, political and, more recently, public health crisis, contribute to this plurilingual and multicultural landscape (Ramon and Perrone, 2013; Tierz and Muniesa, 2013; Saumell i Olivella, 2021). This is because they have had to rely on creating, connecting and maintaining their own distinctive audiences and communities of practice to ensure their survival. So, while the Sala Flyhard in La Bordeta was created specifically to stage contemporary theatre writing in Catalan, Porta4 (now L'Autèntica) and La Badabadoc prioritise other theatrical traditions, including a broad range of work with different varieties of Spanish.

In part because plurilingualism is not a new phenomenon in contemporary Catalan theatre, with companies often translating Catalan-language productions into Spanish in order to be able to tour outside of the Catalan-speaking territories, it has tended to be framed in recent cultural criticism as a mark of the fluidity and creativity characteristic of individual and community negotiation of a "translation zone" (Apter, 2006; Simon, 2012). Yet, whereas Buffery (2013a; b) looks at this primarily as an intra-cultural translation process that reflects the plurilingual heritage of the Iberian Peninsula, Feldman (2022: 18) has — following Carlson (2006) — since identified a "new cosmopolitan" tendency "that seeks to move beyond the confines of the nation-state to encourage new paradigms of solidarity and interconnectedness that accentuate cultural and linguistic pluralism." In many ways, this dovetails with wider shifts in perception of phenomena like bilingualism, translation and trans-languaging, which are now generally celebrated rather than viewed with suspicion by linguists, cognitive scientists and educators, alongside increasing calls for trans- or post-national reframing of literary and cultural historiography. Even in studies that have revisited more systematically the question of plurilingualism in Catalan literary history, distinguishing diverse modalities — linguistic alternation, amphilingualism and mixtilingualism — and functions, contemporary theatre is marked out as different, and hence treated in less depth than other genres, precisely because of its perceived permeability to dialectal and linguistic diversity (Rossich and Cornellà, 2014: 189-190; 235-236). In other words, from a long historical perspective, plurilingual (especially bi- and translingual Catalan-Castilian) practice is so common that it might be considered to be unremarkable, if not unmarked (see also London, 1998).

Yet, other cultural historians, such as Orozco (2007), present an alternative view, associating institutional intervention in the theatrical landscape between 1980 and 2000 with an attempt to eradicate plurilingualism:

> La relación entre Cataluña y el resto del Estado ha jugado un papel clave en la configuración de las políticas teatrales. Durante el gobierno socialista, las heridas todavía abiertas de la dictadura perfilaron una política teatral proteccionista del hecho catalán que dirigió su mirada hacia el interior y hacia Europa. Esta situación empeoró ligeramente durante el mandato del Partido Popular, cuya política cultural radicalizó las posiciones de los nacionalismos periféricos. En este sentido, la reacción del gobierno autonómico ha sido la de poner en marcha una

> discriminación positiva de la cultura catalana, que utiliza como lengua de expresión el catalán... Por ello, desde el punto de vista del sector más escéptico de la crítica, el teatro ha sido utilizado como instrumento para llevar a cabo la frenética lucha por la diferenciación cultural de la nación catalana. (Orozco, 2007: 270)

More recently, there has been a critical tendency (see, for instance, Forti, 2017) to link the emergence of pro-independence activism in Catalonia to the impact of linguistic and cultural normalization under Jordi Pujol's presidency of the Generalitat (1980-2003), often collapsing the more restrictive operation of the latter — primarily concerned with educational and status planning — with the concurrent neoliberal processes associated with the so-called C.T. or Cultura de la Transición (Martinez, 2012). However, as in the case of Orozco (2007), such approaches both overlook the limited capacity for legitimization of sub-state nationalisms and conveniently elide the ways in which economic neoliberalism and globalized markets not only depend upon but have by and large contributed to reinforce hegemonic languages (see Fernàndez, 2008). Even more problematically, they play into the hands of politicians and activist groups like the Foro Babel who present Catalan linguistic policy as an affront to linguistic rights. The culmination of this "war of the languages" (Cuenca, 2009) has been the Spanish High Court in Catalonia's 2022 ruling that at least 25% of classes in Catalan schools take place in Spanish.

It is this "complex linguistic diversity" (Kraus et al., 2021: 449), characterized by the interaction between "historical forms of multilingualism and more recent patterns of linguistic heterogeneity", that needs to be addressed in the context of imagining the future in/for Catalan dramatic writing, whether we define the latter in the narrow sense of proto-performance scripts in the Catalan language or (as in Batlle, 2020) as any language-based theatre created for Catalan stage(s). Although I am less interested in assessing how complex linguistic diversity is currently represented or managed than beginning to imagine a future in which it is recognised and mapped in all its complexity, the emerging field of Linguistic Landscapes offers a useful model, both because of its concern with analysing the representation and interaction between languages in a defined public space, and the way in which it has begun to address the challenge of merging two of its principal foci: minority language contexts — particularly those in which a situation of historical diglossia or language asymmetry has led to language planning interventions (Landry and Bourhis 1997; Cenoz and Gorter, 2006; Lipovsky, 2019; Leimgruber, 2020), as in the case of Catalonia — and superdiverse urban settings (Blommaert, 2013; Arnaut et al., 2016), where the focus has so far tended to be on the interaction with major hegemonic languages (such as English or Spanish) rather than on the kind of linguistic minorities discussed by Kraus (2021). Before moving to consider more closely the implications of using Linguistic Landscapes as a frame for considering contemporary Catalan theatre, it is important to reflect briefly on the ways in which the increasingly complex sociolinguistic situation in the Catalan-speaking territories has been represented in recent Catalan theatre.

Catalan Theatre and Language Crisis

Debates on language in recent studies of 21st century Catalan theatre practice invariably indicate an awareness of the same process of language shift that is increasingly visible in sociolinguistic surveys of contemporary language use in Catalonia (see, for instance, Sala Beckett, 2008). Indeed, the awareness of a changing linguistic landscape and its relationship to demographic, geopolitical and environmental changes has been addressed overtly in Catalan playwriting since the beginning of the twenty-first century, most poignantly in Josep Benet i Jornet's meditation on the conditions for cultural transmission and survival in *Salamandra* (2005). Towards the end of the play, one of the protagonists asks of a local inhabitant of Barcelona:

> CLAUD: ... I... I això del català...?
>
> SENYOR, *encara amb el cap a la carta:* Eh? *(Es recupera ràpid. Busca una resposta.)* Ah, res. No ho sé..., com aquest barri. Un..., un fenomen en vies d'extinció. (Benet i Jornet, 2005: 144)

A few years later, in Carles Batlle's *Oblidar Barcelona* (2009) we find further expression of the fragility of the Catalan language in the face of the velocity of change in urban space:

> SALVADOR: El barri. La gent no és la mateixa, i no parlo per vostè. [...] Totes aquestes places dures, brutes, plenes de canalla amb patins, gorres, i movent-se així, com els negres de les pel·lícules. Els rètols de les botigues són tots escrits amb gargots: línies ondulades, punts, palets, teuladetes, signes d'ex/clamació... (Batlle, 2009: 117-118)

Yet even though both draw attention to the subjective impact produced by shifts in the surrounding linguistic landscape, and overtly consider the impact of globalization, multiculturalism, and sociolinguistic asymmetries on individual and community lived experience, they nevertheless reject the option increasingly considered most "realist" in audiovisual media, that is to simply provide a mirror of social plurilingualism:

> Pel que fa a la televisió i la ràdio, en aquest tombant de segle sembla detectar-se un retorn al bilingüisme, sobretot als programes d'humor (com *Polònia* o *APM*) i a les sèries costumistes (*Jet lag* o *Plats bruts*). Molts d'aquests casos són un reflex de la renúncia a construir una realitat literària o mediàtica lingüísticament independent — contra allò que fan les altres cultures del nostre entorn, empeses per l'hegemonia indiscutida de la seva llengua. No ho jutgem, ens limiten (sic) a constatar una evidència. L'evidència, alhora, que possiblement ens trobem davant un símptoma més de substitució lingüística. (Rossich and Cornellà, 2014: 236)

Instead, they remind us that theatre is a cultural form whose function is not only to represent, but also contributes to shape and constitute the sociocultural context of which it forms a part.

This function is particularly clear in two plays written at the height of the political crisis associated with the Catalan independence process (see Buffery, 2019: 333-338). Marc Rosich's *A tots els que heu vingut* (2017) overtly links the Catalan cultural malaise underpinning the 9 November 2014 consultation on the political future of Catalonia with the linguistic and cultural interventionism of *Pujolisme*. Via critical reconstruction of the figure of Jordi Pujol, and his influence on the occupants of "Un típic pis antic de l'Eixample" during "[u]n compte enrere que comença un 25 de juliol de 2014, tot just quan esclata el cas Pujol, i acaba la tarda de l'11 de setembre de 2014", Rosich simultaneously satirizes and reveals the continuing symbolic power of the institutionalization of Catalan culture under Convergència i Unió. In contrast, Narcís Comadira's *L'hort de les oliveres* (2015) provides a more complex vision of the actors and networks involved in a changing political, economic and demographic landscape, that ranges from the rejection of the pro-independence movement by a committed Catalanist like Frederic Riu ("Tota una vida militant,/ tota una vida al partit/ per fer d'aquest país un país cohesionat,/ català... i ara/ quatre eixelebrats ho volen fer anar tot en doina" [Comadira, 2015: 33]), in favour of maintaining the socioeconomic status quo, to the prioritization of linguistic resistance by the poet Cordelira:

> Per mi, Catalunya és la llengua
> [...]
> Que la seva llengua sigui humiliada,
> que mori lentament
> per desídia de tots,
> un poeta no ho pot suportar... (Comadira, 2015: 98)

Both plays offer profound insights into the range of positionings and perspectives on the desired shape of Catalan culture, revealing the operation of often mutually exclusive social narrative frames that shape analysis of the contemporary sociocultural landscape. Of interest here is their foregrounding of the relationship between language and landscape, and the diverse ways in which this is seen to have been inflected by political and economic context, according to socioeconomic, generational, cultural, and other individual and community identitarian factors. Whereas in the universe of Comadira's play self-identification with other minority groups (such as LGBTQ+) appears to enable recognition of the need to resist linguistic minoritization, elsewhere protection of the Catalan language in education, the media or commerce is perceived to be artificial, retrograde or exclusivist. This in turn helps to understand phenomena like the relative downplaying of sociolinguistic concerns by the Catalan secessionist movement, as denounced in the 2016 *Manifest Koiné* (Soler et al., 2020); the prioritization by new theatre practitioners of embodied performance over language and the dramatic text; and even calls for a return to "el català que ara es parla" — or as Enric Gomà prefers, "el català tranquil" (Gomà, 2021) — as an antidote to the strictures of standardization.

Linguistic Landscapes and Catalan Theatre

If I keep returning to the word landscape here, it is in part metaphorically: to anchor this discussion in a vision of Catalan theatre that goes beyond the listing of authors, texts, performances, themes, aesthetics, and physical/virtual theatre spaces, to consider the relations between all these aspects. But, as rehearsed in the previous sections, it is also in recognition of the more concrete, referential meaning that the term has acquired in the dynamic field of Linguistic Landscapes, attentive to the ways in which languages are represented in and shape the physical and virtual spaces that surround us, via advertising, street signs, the names of buildings, companies and shops, public information signage, placards and leaflets, graffiti and street art. While they have not to my knowledge been the subject of previous study, the spaces, activities and uses associated with the theatre landscape contribute dynamically to the Catalan linguistic landscape, as seen both in the previous image of an advertising bollard and in the street level photographs reproduced below:



Figure 2. *Eva contra Eva* (2021) at the Teatre Goya, September 2021, as an example of amphilingualism.



Figure 3. 2021-2022 programme information on wall outside Teatre Tantarantana, with examples of dialectal variation.



Figure 4. The Linguistic Landscape of Barcelona's Paral·lel, October 2021.

Furthermore, theatre and performance spaces themselves merit the kind of attention recently focused on other defined public spaces such as schools and government buildings (Cernoz and Gorter, 2015; Rámini Díaz, 2015), as linguistic landscapes where the interaction of languages on display contributes to shaping user perceptions, responses and behaviours.

This would entail the kind of multimodal analysis that has begun to be employed in street-level studies (Comajoan Colomé, 2013; Lyons 2015; Pütz and Mundt, 2018), combining examination of signage, posters, leaflets and different modes of on-stage writing, including surtitling, with analysis of on- and off-stage soundscapes and AR/VR tools (such as the increasing use of QR codes to link to online content). As visualised in figure 5, the increasing



Figure 5. The view of the Teatre Lliure from Plaça Margarita Xirgu in the months following Catalonia's disputed referendum on secession from Spain (November 2017) with calls for liberty and democracy clearly on display.



Figure 6. Different types of signage on the Teatre Lliure in Montjuïc, 2021-2022.

promotion of cultural accessibility and inclusion in response to the radical demographic changes since the mid-1990s and corresponding reflection on the role of theatre and culture in a democratic society has contributed immensely to the proliferation of languages in Catalan theatre culture. Alongside techniques designed to include new audiences — via different forms of audiovisual rewriting — and increasing outreach and engagement with other community spaces, such as municipal libraries, community centres and schools, there are also the diverse initiatives that were put in place during the Covid-19 pandemic, such as live-streaming of performances and debates, access to pdf versions of texts, and other apps and resources (see Figure 8).

Not only would multimodal analysis contribute to a richer and more nuanced understanding of the dynamic and complex processes of translation and translanguaging involved in negotiating contemporary linguistic landscapes, but it might also enable a more empirical — and, potentially, less polarized — vision of the place of language(s) in the Catalan theatre landscape. Plotting the presence and interaction of different linguistic codes and varieties diachronically and synchronically, using distant reading methodologies (such as corpus-based analysis and GIS techniques), would help to contextualise specific linguistic choices and enable more critical readings of the uses and effects of plurilingualism in different authors, texts and stagings. Furthermore, the application of ethnographic methods to explore the impact on the different agents, audiences and communities that inhabit and negotiate the landscape might lead to more reflexive evaluation of the impact and implications of plurilingualism for Catalan theatre practice, capable of

taking us beyond current tendencies to oppose the perceived exclusivity of linguistic standardization and the dramatic text with the assumed inclusivity, diversity and multicultural pluralism of post-dramatic theatre. How can we imagine the future, both from the perspective of scholarship and creative practice?

In the remainder of this paper, I am going to focus on some of the changes I have observed in the linguistic landscapes of Catalan theatre, generally when investigating other aspects of cultural representation. As outlined above, these changes need to be read as a function of socioeconomic and cultural political context, above all due to the triple crisis — economic, political, and environmental — from 2008 onwards that in the Catalan case took the form of pro-independence mobilization (Crameri, 2014; Dowling, 2018). What I will try to show is the benefit of reading and mapping these changes while simultaneously acknowledging the complexity of the relationship between languages, cultures, and territories, and the vulnerability of minority languages in the face of globalization flows. For me, this means adopting Tsuda's (2007) "ecology of language paradigm" and recognising, with Cronin (2016), the need to take a deeper, geological perspective on language and environment: one that goes beyond the usual frames of cultural studies, in which texts and representations are read as mirrors of current society, to imagine the layers of remains they leave behind, and the relationship between past, present and future sediments. In other words, I am starting from a perspective that recognises the relationship between the synchronic actuality of linguistic landscapes and more diachronic, eco-linguistic questions. Here, I look at three aspects of these eco-linguistic changes, which are themselves interpermeable: 1. The presence and visibility of plurilingual dramaturgies; 2. The treatment and recovery of invisible or marginal figures from the Catalan theatrical tradition (above all as relates to dialectal diversity); 3. The role of translation from other traditions (especially as regards the representation of linguistic conflict and minority cultural identities).

The Presence and Visibility of Plurilingual Theatre Writing

Even though it continues to be quite common to hear the assertion that true writers dedicate themselves to cultivating one language for their writing, a large number of Catalan dramatists are currently challenging such a view by authoring texts in both Catalan and Spanish and/or self-translating works from Catalan to Spanish. Key names include Victoria Szpunberg, Helena Tornero, Jordi Casanovas, Pau Miró, Sergi Belbel, and, most recently, Josep Maria Miró, who has penned two of his texts in Spanish: *Olvidémonos de ser turistas* (2019) and *Restos del fulgor* (2022). The case of Lluïsa Cunillé, especially, draws attention to the limitations of the national literary historiography, given the ways in which most extant studies have tended to focus primarily on her works in Catalan, only mentioning anecdotally her collaborations with Paco Zarzoso for the Companyia Hongaresa de Teatre, some of which are especially interesting from the perspective of linguistic landscapes, from *Aquel aire infinito* (2003) to *El alma se serena* (2012), which reflects

the embattled landscape of the Valencian capital. Without considering these, or her creative collaborations with Xavier Albertí around aspects of the nineteenth-century popular theatrical repertoire such as the *sainets* of Serafí Pitarra and the *sarsuela*, it is more difficult to understand the sea-change in her theatrical universe that led to the creation of such dynamically heteroglossic works as *El bordello* (2008), *Carrer Franklin* (2015) and, most recently, *L'emperadriu del Paral·lel* (2021). In other words, while the fact of bilingual authorship does not, in itself, necessarily have an impact on the linguistic landscape, the underlying causes of writers' linguistic choices and the increasing visibility of such practice are significant, as is the way in which it shapes the soundscape of particular works.

A degree of plurilingualism has always been a salient feature of Catalan dramaturgy. We need only think of the preferences and behaviour of groups like Els Joglars, whose use of bilingual — Catalan and Spanish — texts in the 1980s and 1990s was an overt method of questioning the institutionalization of the Catalan language and culture in that period. The primarily comic or satirical function of this kind of language alternation is something confirmed in Rossich and Cornellà's 2014 study of literary plurilingualism:

> Un cas diferent és el del teatre, sobretot el còmic on companyies com Els Joglars o La Cubana i comediants com Joan Capri, La Trinca, Eugenio o Pepe Rubianes han jugat sovint amb el bilingüisme català/castellà. El cas d'Eugenio ha estat analitzat per Woolard. En aquest ambit, d'obres plurilingües n'hi ha moltes, des de *EEUUROPA* (2003) del Teatre de Guerrilla, que inclou català, castellà, anglès, francès i alemany, macarrònics o no, fins a *Forever Young* del Tricicle, "que incorpora el català en breus fragments de textos i es mostra un diàleg bilingüe, tan col·loquialment esquizofrènic com es viu al carrer" (Bordes 2011). (Rossich and Cornellà, 2014: 235-236)

Going back in time, we find playwrights from the late 19th and early 20th centuries, such as Santiago Rusiñol, who have been recovered from the archive to an unprecedented degree in recent years. Indeed, Rossich and Cornellà (2014: 291-3) consider such mixtilingualism to have had great diachronic and synchronic continuity in the Catalan-speaking territories, only interrupted to a significant degree during the Franco dictatorship, when amphilingualism became a common strategy. Figures 1 and 2 above exemplify more recent cases of Spanish/Catalan amphilingualism as a strategy favoured by contemporary commercial theatres.

Less comedic cases and functions of Catalan/Spanish mixtilingualism, such as that employed in the 2003-2004 Sala Beckett cycle *L'acció té lloc a Barcelona* — with Cunillé's *Barcelona, mapa d'ombres* (2003) often presented as another of the turning points in her practice, towards less elliptical spaces — or by Manuel Veiga in *16.000 pessetes* (2005), were initially read as attempts to reflect the sociolinguistic reality of the city of Barcelona, followed by the increasing presence of other varieties of Spanish, such as the Argentine inflections of Szpunberg's 2007 *La màquina de parlar* and 2008-2010 trilogy on the fragility of memory: *El meu avi no va anar a Cuba*, *La*

marca preferida de las hermanas Clausman and *La memòria d'una Ludisia*. But it is the growth in incidence of languages other than Spanish in Catalan theatre writing that has become a particular feature of the post-2009 landscape, above all English, but also Italian, French, German, other minority languages such as Irish, Basque or Galician, and the languages of new arrivals from Eastern Europe and the Global South (as in the documentary theatre work of La Conquesta del Pol Sud and the Agrupació Señor Serrano). Where English is concerned, the principal trends are to create intertextuality with international audiovisual media productions — going beyond the use of English-language music that was so prevalent in spectacular stagings by Calixto Bieito and Àlex Rigola in the late 1990s and early 2000s to the incorporation of the kind of taboo phraseology that is now so prevalent in urban youth varieties. For instance, "fucking ****" is, somewhat ironically, often used as a shorthand to reflect contexts of violence, conflict and abuses of power. Such is the case of Denise Duncan's *El combat del segle* (2020), as translated into Catalan by Marc Rosich, where we find: "Collons, soc el gegant de Galveston, / Soc Jack fucking Johnson!" (Duncan, 2020: 96). It is something we will encounter again in Catalan translations of the works of Wajdi Mouawad.

In the case of languages other than English and Spanish, their inclusion is normally used to show sensitivity to situations of cultural difference, in recognition of radical alterity, even though in some cases they are used to indicate the opposite — that is, the lack of cultural awareness associated with global tourism. Two cases I am familiar with because of the opportunity to translate both into English are Josep Maria Miró's adaptation of *Un cel de plom* (2016) and *El futur* (2019) by Helena Tornero. In both, the recourse to plurilingualism reflects processes of exile, migration and mobility, and the desire to recognise and witness often traumatic realities of inter- and trans-cultural contact and exclusion. In *Un cel de plom* (2016), based on a biographical novel about the life of Mauthausen deportee, Neus Català, plurilingualism is employed to bear witness to traumatic histories; hence the refusal to domesticate the harsh words of the camp ("*—Raus! Raus! Austreten! Weiter Machen!*"), respect for the cultural and linguistic differences of the women whose memories are maintained by Català, and logo-erotic sensitivity to expressing different emotional states and processes of intersubjective negotiation. Key moments from a linguistic landscape perspective include the protagonist's mapping of French names and places that marked her life as a member of the Resistance, including her account of collectively singing *La Marseillaise* in honour of fellow prisoners removed at night to be executed, and her 1968 protest at the Spanish Embassy in Paris, where she reads out the Declaration of Human Rights in Spanish.

In the case of Tornero's *El futur* (2019), a "road play" that takes its audience on a journey from Barcelona port to the Gulf of Bothnia, crossing four different national borders and navigating a linguistic landscape populated with signs in double the number of languages (as represented in Figure 7 below), we find more light-hearted reflection on the Catalan sociolinguistic situation, in the repeated surprise expressed by different characters that an immigrant like Halim has taken the time to learn such perfect Catalan:

DIANA; D'on ets? I com és que parles tan bé?
HOME ESTRANGER [HALIM]: Gràcies.
DIANA: De res. On has après a parlar així?
HOME ESTRANGER [HALIM]: Aquí. He estudiat.
DIANA: Has anat a classe?
HOME ESTRANGER [HALIM]: No. A la biblioteca. (Tornero, 2019: 373)

HOME ESTRANGER [HALIM]: Disculpi. (*Ella riu.*) Per què rius?
DIANA: Per les expressions que utilitzes.
HOME ESTRANGER [HALIM]: Estan malament?
DIANA: No. Però són curioses. [...] La gent ja no les diu, aquestes coses. Parles com un llibre. (Tornero, 2019: 374)

ALFRED: Qui t'ho ha explicat? Qui és aquest home? És d'alguna organització pacifista? *Who are you?*
HALIM: Pots parlar-me en català.
ALFRED: Parles català?
HALIM: Sí.
DIANA: Ha llegit més llibres en català en tres anys que tu en tota la teva vida. Tot un exemple d'integració. (Tornero, 2019: 400)

Alongside clear intent to represent the wider European landscape as a plurilingual space, the play draws on Tornero's first-hand experiences of voluntary work with Syrian refugees in Greece and Barcelona, to provide critical scrutiny of cultural stereotypes, explore the role of intertextuality in the construction of shared understandings of reality, and insert judicious reminders of the asymmetrical relations between languages, down to the very question of what you need to do with words in order to be able to pass for a European.

Figure 7. Diversity of Languages in *El futur* (2019).

Proper names/place names	Historial/Literary/Cultural references	Other Languages
Halim/Agnetha/Diana/Manar/ Danieles Milano/Hennig Tössberg	Camp Joffre, Harkis, Algerian War	*Merde, Scheisse, Skit*
Moll de Sant Bertran/Meridiana/ Eixemple	*Pont de l'Europe* and *Europbrücke*	*S'il vous plaît, ¿Me entiendes? Comprenez-vous?*
Michelin/Sorbonne/*Ingenium 14 Turbochnaged engine/Caldera Red*	Nuremberg trials/Heidegger	*Benissimo. Bravissimo. Grazie. Ciao. Ciao, bella*
Haraki/Dollyo Chagui/alla Milanese/ Dolores/*Kreditbanken*	Stockholm syndrome/Jan Erik Olsson	*"Oh! Mi piace molto l'Italia! Io he passato le vacanze a Italia. A Sorrento"*
Portvendres/Collioure/Argelès/ Perpignan	Alfred Nobel/Nobel/Vasa	*L'Allemagne: deux points. Tatuage*
Kehl/Flensburg/Krusa	Chekhov/Andresen/Elsinore/ 1001 Nights/Agnetha Fältskog/ Victor Hugo/Strindberg	*avant-la-lettre*
Malmö/Kronborg/Helsingborg/ Jönköping/Linköping/Norrjöping/ Nyköping/Gulf of Bothnia	Judith Nisse Shklar/Saramago	*God dag. Vad vill du ha?*

This ranges from Diana teaching Halim a few basic phrases in Italian so that he can perform the identity on the Italian passport she pickpocketed for him (Tornero, 2019: 377, 386) to Halim's connection of the word *Harki*, as they pass by the former detention centre Camp Joffre in Rivesaltes, to the Arabic *haraki*, meaning rapidity of movement (381). The performative reflection we find in *El futur*, like that in Lluisa Cunillé's incredibly powerful *Après moi, le déluge* (2007), on the (im)possibility of translation in situations of socioeconomic injustice and socio-cultural asymmetry ultimately draws attention to the limits of linguistic landscapes and the politics of representation.

The Recovery and/or Reframing of Previously Invisible or Marginalised Playwrights and Texts from the Theatrical Archive

As indicated in the previous category, and highlighting the overlaps between different aspects of the theatrical landscape, many of the figures recovered from the theatrical archive since 2008 seem to have been selected precisely because of their plurilingualism. The aforementioned cases of Santiago Rusiñol (1861-1931) and Serafí Pitarra/Frederic Soler (1839-1895) are especially significant in this respect, as they respond not only to the mission of the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya in the twenty-first century to promote a varied theatrical repertoire in Catalan, but also indicate greater openness to linguistic variation than was observable pre-2008 (Sala Beckett 2008). The operations to salvage the work of Rusiñol and Pitarra were spearheaded by Xavier Albertí and ranged from his collaboration with Cunillé on *Assajant Pitarra* (2007) to a 2014 spotlight on the nineteenth-century pioneer's work. For his part, prior to 2017, Rusiñol was better known amongst modern audiences as an artist rather than a playwright, with his *L'auca del senyor Esteve* (1907) being the most recognisable literary reference associated with his name. The recent cluster of plays adapted for the twenty-first stage range from La Cubana's 2017 musical version of *Gente Bien* at the Coliseum to the "Epicentre Rusiñol" at the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya in 2018-2019, culminating in productions of *Els Jocs Florals de Canprosa* (2018), *L'Hèroe* (2020), the creative reimaginings of *El místic* by Albert Arribas (in *Ilud mysticum*), Els Joglars' *Señor Ruiseñor* (2019), and the more modest, but relentlessly satirical adaptation of *El bon policia* at El Maldà in 2021. All of them have provided the opportunity for pointed reflection on contemporary sociopolitical relations, hypocrisy, injustice and corruption, as well as how these intersect with navigation of the linguistic landscape. For instance, the timeline for La Cubana's colourful operetta begins in 1917 to mark the first performance of Rusiñol's play, focusing on the cack-handed attempts of Barcelona's nouveau riche industrial bourgeoisie to switch to Castilian to cement their place among Spanish high society, before jumping to 1951 and the Barcelona tram strike, 1980 and the early days of Catalan regional autonomy, and finally 2017:

> Al 2017. Les corrupteles estan a l'ordre del dia. No se'n salva ningú. El món s'ha globalitzat i els protagonistes també. Les llonganisses les exporten per tot el món. I fins i tot estan a punt d'obrir una factoria a la Xina. El títol nobiliari

> s'amaga i no s'utilitza ni a les targetes de visita. Perquè Hisenda no els busqui les pessigolles, la riquesa es gaudeix, però no s'exhibeix gaire. El català el parla tothom. El que està de moda és l'anglès. I el castellà només quan s'agafa l'AVE per anar a Madrid a fer negocis. La moda és ser independentista, però tots acaben votant el PP (*Gente Bien* theatre programme, 2017).

Here, it is not only the 2017 allusion to macaronic English in *Gente bien* that marks a shift in the contemporary linguistic landscape, but the very recovery of a playwright resistant to linguistic standardization. Furthermore, the range of uses and interpretations of the relationship between language(s) and landscape is brought into sharp focus by La Cubana's musical adaptation: the efforts of different generations of a bourgeois family to adapt to changing sociopolitical contexts across an entire century are hilarious precisely because both actors and audience are placed at a critical distance from the former's often desperate negotiations between shifting polarities. Sociolinguistic asymmetry between Catalan and Spanish is somewhat displaced by the presence of English, but certainly not to the extent of being reversed.

Other works recovered or adapted from the literary archive have placed greater focus on dialectal variation, the most notable of these being Maria Barbal's *Pedra de tartera* (2010) and Víctor Català/Caterina Albert's *Solitud* (2021) at the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, and Irene Solà's *Canto jo i balla la muntanya* (2021) at the Biblioteca de Catalunya, all staged versions of acclaimed novels by three generations of Catalan women writers. While in some ways this may seem to be an unremarkable phenomenon, particularly when we think of the prior focus of initiatives like the Projecte Alcover (now Xarxa Alcover) or the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya's T6 project, which actively encouraged Catalan playwriting from across the Països Catalans, the real transformation comes from the fact that diverse varieties of Catalan are now being showcased on Barcelona's main stages. Previously, such works appeared primarily in smaller or more peripheral spaces, like the Círcol Maldà, the Teatre Tantarantana, or the TNC's Sala Tallers. The focus on women's voices attested in these three acclaimed adaptations, as well as their sensual, eco-humanistic sensitivity to the relationship between human and natural landscapes, translated in all three cases into the kind of environmentally conscious, stripped back stagings that have characterised Àlex Rigola's recent adaptations of Chekhov. In other words, commitment to promoting a more plural, inclusive, and democratic vision of Catalan theatre heritage reflects a deeper recognition of the profound relationship between language and landscape: the link between an eco-linguistic focus on language survival and the kind of eco-translational responses to environmental crisis called for by Cronin (2016).

A final question to complete my brief survey in this category is that of the aspects of theatrical heritage that appear no longer to be recoverable. Here I am particularly struck by the case of Josep Maria de Sagarra, whose works from the immediate post-Civil War period, such as *Galatea*, has merited revival in recent years, but seemingly at the cost of the disappearance of his Shakespeare translations, despite the dialectal richness they contain and the mythical

significance they maintained up until the late 1990s. Although the diversity of Shakespeare translations at the turn of the millennium was initially interpreted as a sign of maturity in the theatrical system, an overcoming of anxiety of influence (as in Buffery 2010), the complete absence of Sagarra's versions over the past decade is more difficult to explain. Is it to do with problematization of Sagarra's political positioning towards the end of the Franco dictatorship, particularly given the increasing focus on a democratic Republican heritage since the creation of the Memorial Democràtic in 2007? Or simply the prioritization of accurate, flexible and believable translations, that sound more natural in the mouths of contemporary actors (Sala Beckett, 2008)? The latter appears to be the most likely explanation, particularly if we consider the dramaturgical challenges faced in adapting works like Rusiñol's *Els Jocs Florals de Canprosa* (2018), and the numerous anachronisms introduced to make the play intelligible and relevant to contemporary audiences. It is nevertheless remarkable that such a rich source of dialectal diversity has now disappeared from a linguistic landscape in which it was prominent for decades.

The Role of Translation from Other Traditions

Reflection on Sagarra's versions of Shakespeare connects neatly with the final category I will consider briefly here, namely the place occupied by translation from other traditions in the contemporary linguistic landscape of Catalan theatre, alongside the use of different forms of audiovisual rewriting. While diachronic attention to translations and adaptations of classic theatre texts can provide exceptional insights into changing linguistic usage, habits, and ideologies, it is equally revealing to map the contemporary authors that populate institutional theatre libraries and programmes. For instance, the key platform for showcasing contemporary Catalan dramatists provided by the Tarragona-based Arola publishing house in conjunction with the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya includes translations of collected works by Sarah Kane, Martin Crimp and Tim Crouch, as well as some editions of works in Spanish, most notably that of the Franco-Uruguayan playwright Sergio Blanco, who will be further discussed below. Likewise, the Sala Beckett's commitment to contemporary European theatre writing places Catalan theatre, language and culture in continuous dialogue with other languages and traditions, visible in programming, workshops associated with the Obrador d'Estiu, and a significant presence in transnational initiatives like Fabulamundi-Playwriting Europe (https://www.fabulamundi.eu/en/).

However, consideration of phenomena like these raises the problem of defining the limits of linguistic landscapes, drawing attention to the ways in which multiculturalism and multimodality blur the boundaries between different social, political and cultural ambits. This is one of the reasons why I have elected to focus primarily, as in the previous sections, on how the interaction between different languages is represented in particular works, such as the cluster of translations of Irish theatre in the period between 2008 and 2021, and La Perla 29's acclaimed versions of Wajdi Mouawad's works (see www.laperla29.cat/historic).

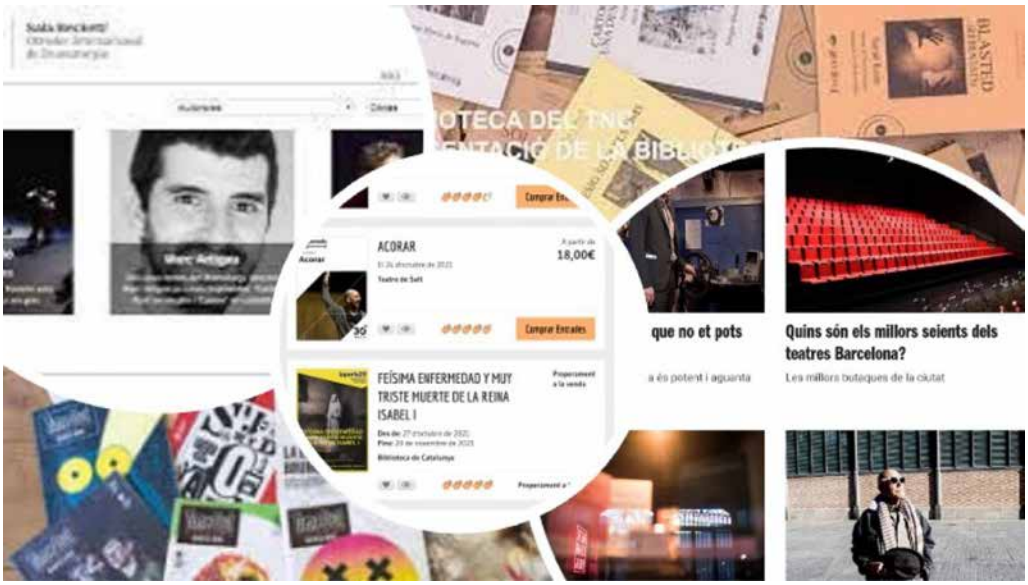


Figure 8. A collage of different aspects of the linguistic landscape of contemporary Catalan theatre in virtual space.

The prevailing vision of Ireland in La Perla 29 adaptations is, significantly, neither that of the Celtic Tiger era nor the more recent economic crisis that led the island to be grouped with Portugal, Italy, Greece and Spain as one of the underperforming PIIGS countries, but rather one that evokes with more or less critical nostalgia a past of rural conviviality in keeping with the tenor of some of the plays discussed in the previous section. This means that multimodality is a central feature, through the incorporation of Irish music, dancing and songs, and that there is often an attempt to preserve linguistic traces of Gaelige, although Irish words are generally pronounced incorrectly (for instance, *fleadh* in Ferran Utzet's 2015 version of Brian Friel's *Dansa d'agost* is verbalized as *flé-ad* rather than *flà*). The case of Friel's *Traduccions / Translations*, translated by Joan Sellent and directed by Ferran Utzet in 2014, is particularly interesting not only because of the way in which it negotiates a history of language substitution due to colonial violence, but also due to the impact it had on debate about the contemporary Catalan sociolinguistic context (Buffery, 2019: 338-340). Identified by numerous press reviewers as a text whose emotional impact stemmed from recognition of the effects of real and symbolic violence on the relationship between different languages and cultures, many drew overt parallels with evidence of linguistic conflict closer to home. For instance, Ramon Oliver reflected with nostalgia on the sociolinguistic situation in Catalonia in the 1980s and 1990s — "Llavors el sistema d'immersió lingüística semblava tan plàcidament consolidat [...] Però, ara amb tanta llei Wert, tant 'lapao' i tant decret de trilingüisme... aquella realitat consolidada sembla torna a trontollar" (Oliver, 2014) — drawing attention to the increasing incidence of Spanish state in Catalonia's cultural and linguistic policies. While Sellent opts to translate the relationship between the languages of the colonisers and the colonised by recourse to different registers of Catalan, and thus contributes to the increasing presence of dialectal variation discussed previously, it is significant that Friel's play is first staged

in Catalan during this period of political, economic and sociolinguistic crisis rather than the era of "placid" linguistic normalization.

In comparison, the translational landscapes of Wajdi Mouawad's plays in Catalan are generally characterized by a higher degree of cultural and linguistic plurality, due to their representation of experiences and histories of migration, mobility and multidirectional memory. This means that they create soundscapes in which it is common to find linguistic alternation between Catalan, French, English, Arabic and, in the case of *Boscos* (2017), German, as well as more experimental instances of mixtilingualism, as in the excerpt from *Incendis* (2012) below:

> NIHAD: [...] You know, well, I wrote this song when it was war. War on my country. Yes, one day a woman that I loved died. Yes. Shouting by a sniper, I feel a big crash in my hart. My hart colaps. Yes. I crie. And I wrote this song.
> It will be a plaer to heare your love song, Nihad.
> No problem, Kurt. (Mouawad, trans. Genebat, 2017: 219)

> NIHAD: You know, Kirk, sniper job is fantastic job.
> Justament, Nihad, can you talk about this?
> Yeah! It is an artistic job.
> Because a good sniper, don't shoot de qualsevol manera, no, no, noooo! I have a lot of principe, Kirk!
> [...]
> Yes, yes, I kill children. No problema. Is like an ocell, you know.
> So.
> No, I don't shoot women like Elizabeth Taylor. Elizabeth Taylor is a strong actriu. I like her very much and I don't want to kill Elizabeth Taylor. So, when I see a women like her, I don't shoot her... (Mouawad, trans. Genebat, 2017: 223)

Here, in translating the English/French mixtilingualism of Mouawad's original, which transmits Nahid's cultural and linguistic alienation and displacement as mediated by the kind of recourse to a hegemonic, globalized English that we have seen in previous discussion on plurilingual dramaturgies, Genebat maintains traces of the French (*crie*, *principe*) in the shift to an English/Catalan equivalent. In other words, this provides an example of the ways in which translation contributes to unanticipated linguistic plurality, as well as reflecting shifts in the function of English within the wider linguistic landscape of Catalan theatre.

Finally, I would like to return briefly to the case of Sergio Blanco's interaction with the Catalan theatre landscape in recent years, from performances on various stages since 2017 to the publication of works in Spanish with Arola and the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya (Blanco, 2017; 2018). One of these interventions was entitled *Cartografía de una desaparición* (Blanco, 2017), staged as a performative response to an invitation by TNC director Xavier Albertí to reflect on the life and work of Joan Brossa in the run-up to the centenary of the latter's birth. Staged and performed by Blanco himself on 15 May 2017 as an autofictional lecture, the play interweaves the fictionalized

history of his encounter with Brossa's life and work, always cited in Spanish translation, with accounts of embodied negotiation of the socio-cultural landscape of Barcelona, via encounters with street names, landmarks, institutions, other bodies and languages, including Catalan, which he claims slowly imposes itself on him through the practice of getting random passers-by to read out Brossa poems in the original language.

> De a poco, he podido dejar de leerlo en español y he empezado a leerlo en catalán.
>
> Finalmente, Brossa terminó imponiéndome su lengua. En solo cuatro meses, logró establecer el catalán entre nosotros. Y a tal punto que un día me sorprendo a mí mismo escribiendo Catalunya sin eñe.
>
> Solamente con la fuerza y la belleza de sus palabras, Brossa logró la independencia: la autonomía: la emancipación: la libertad.
>
> Queremos vivir plenamente en catalán, dice su famoso afiche.
>
> El diseño es hermoso.
>
> La fórmula, contundente.
>
> El credo, irrebatible.
>
> Si hay algo que he aprendido en estos cuatro meses de catalán intensivo, es que la verdadera independencia pasa por la lengua, porque es ahí en donde empieza todo y en donde termina todo. (Blanco, 2017: 81-82)

The arch humour in this excerpt — in the fact that autofictional Sergio Blanco's learning of Catalan is symbolized by a process of extremely limited graphic substitution, a shift that is not even audible — does not detract from the power of the piece as a whole as an exploration of cultural and linguistic plurality. The epilogue (Blanco, 2017: 89-90) overtly links the alternately playful and painful exploration of different layers of Brossa's language to another geography of disappearance, captured in the image of the Mediterranean sea that has provided the backdrop to the reading of the lecture. In other words, sociolinguistic and ecological concerns are intermingled to foreground questions of linguistic and cultural survival, memory, migration, necropolitics and environmental crisis.

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