

# CATALAN LITERATURE(S) IN POSTCOLONIAL CONTEXT

STEWART KING

*Monash University, Australia*

*The invitation to Catalan culture to be the guest of honour at the 2007 Frankfurt Book Fair has revived a polemic about what Catalan literature is and who can be considered a Catalan author. In their responses to the announcement, many Catalan cultural commentators drew on the language and discourse of postcolonialism to explain the historical and political reasons for the existence of Catalans who write in Castilian and to justify the exclusion of such writers as suitable representatives of Catalan culture. This article examines the use of postcolonial theories by Catalan intellectuals, writers and literary critics. It argues that Catalan postcolonial studies largely reinforce nationalist discourse which maintains that Catalan literature is literature written exclusively in Catalan. The article questions the very restricted understanding of postcolonial subjectivity by Catalan critics, arguing that they either ignore entirely or gloss over theories of bi-directional cultural contact, cultural change and hybridity which are a central feature of postcolonial studies. In light of these unexamined theories, the article proposes a framework for understanding Castilian-language writers from Catalonia and situating them within a broader Catalan postcolonial context.*

— to say that this or that book is (or is not) part of ‘our’ tradition is one of the most debilitating exercises imaginable.

Edward Said<sup>1</sup>

In March 2005 the Frankfurt Book Fair announced that Catalan culture would be the guest of honour in 2007. This announcement has revived a polemic about what constitutes Catalan literature, what its function within Catalan society is and, consequently, who can be considered a Catalan author. The Fair’s press communiqué states that the invitation was extended to ‘la cultura catalana’ because it ‘stands out thanks to its unusual creativity and popular appeal [...] demonstrated by internationally successful authors such as Vázquez Montalbán, Juan Goytisolo or Carlos Ruiz Zafón and artists such as Juan Miró, Salvador Dalí or Antoni Tàpies’.<sup>2</sup> While the offer to present Catalan culture at the world’s most important book fair was welcomed by politicians, publishers and authors as a unique opportunity ‘para dar a conocer al mundo la realidad de la cultura catalana’,<sup>3</sup> the decision to invite a ‘culture’ rather than a ‘literature’ caused some consternation among members of

Address correspondence to: Stewart King, School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics, Monash University 3800, Australia

the literary establishment in Catalonia, who feared that the Catalan language, long the cornerstone of Catalan identity, would be marginalized. This fear was to a certain extent justified, for in the media release — in what can only be described as a surprising act of cultural insensitivity — reference to the Catalan language is entirely absent. The three authors mentioned do not write in Catalan, but almost exclusively in Castilian,<sup>4</sup> and the three undoubtedly Catalan artists — Miró, Dalí and Tàpies — use a non-linguistic medium.<sup>5</sup> Thus, the international success of the above-mentioned authors and artists can be attributed to the fact they write in an international language of culture or use a visual medium, which does not require knowledge of the artists' mother tongue to be understood.

Much to the surprise of many commentators, the inclusion of Castilian-language writers was not an ignorant, albeit understandable, error. The in-coming director of the Fair, Jürgen Boos, made it clear that such writers had to be involved because their exclusion would not provide 'una visió precisa del que és la cultura a Catalunya'.<sup>6</sup> The insistence on the participation of Castilian-language writers from Catalonia provoked a plethora of articles, editorials, letters to the editor and opinion pieces in the pages of the main Catalan and Spanish dailies, particularly the Catalan-language *Avui*, in an attempt to influence the terms and conditions of Catalan involvement before the Fair issued a formal invitation to the Generalitat and the Institut Ramon Llull. Hence, the question on everyone's lips — 'Qui ha d'anar a Frankfurt?'<sup>7</sup> — goes beyond the search for suitable authors willing to travel to Germany on an all-expenses-paid literary junket, to become a question about the very identity of Catalan literature and the cultural and literary location of Catalans who write in Castilian.

For those with a basic understanding of Catalan cultural politics, the debate as to who should represent Catalonia at the Book Fair was fairly predictable. Politicians were divided largely on ideological grounds with the two Catalanist parties — *Convergència i Unió* and *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* — arguing strongly for the exclusive presence of writers in Catalan, while the *Partit Socialista de Catalunya*, affiliated with the national *Partido Socialista Obrero Español*, and the *Partido Popular*, defended the inclusion of Catalans who write in Castilian. In contrast, the Catalan intellectual establishment largely re-affirmed the traditional philological argument that Catalan literature is literature written in Catalan irrespective of whether the writer is born in any one of the four European States — Spain, France, Andorra and Italy — or in one of the four Spanish autonomous communities — Catalonia, Valencia, the Balearic Islands and Aragon — where Catalan is spoken. An author's citizenship, the novelist Jaume Cabré argued, is irrelevant because '[a] marge de les divisions i separacions imposades pel nacionalisme dels Estats, que té les seves raons polítiques i administratives, [...] tantes [...] persones estan unides per un lligam inesborrable: la llengua amb què viuen i pensen, que és la llengua amb què escriuen'.<sup>8</sup> The publisher Isidor Cònsul, in one of the earliest responses to the Fair's first invitation, argues that just as Franz Kafka is considered a German writer despite his Czech citizenship, Catalans who write in Castilian are not Catalan writers, but belong to the Spanish literary tradition.<sup>9</sup> In one of the few public shows of support for such writers, Miquel Alzueta, head of the Catalan publishing house, *Columna*, suggests that they act as ambassadors:

Crec que la presència de la cultura catalana com a invitada d'honor a la Fira de Frankfurt ha de servir per conèixer la literatura catalana, la que es fa en català. Per tal d'aconseguir aquest objectiu i perquè sigui més efectiu, hem d'incloure la presència dels autors catalans que escriuen en castellà

perquè facin d'ambaixadors. Ells són els que poden positivament explicar la realitat que es viu a Catalunya [...] i l'abast de la importància de la literatura catalana, molt desconeguda fora d'aquí.<sup>10</sup>

While this is a positive voice for the involvement at the Fair of Castilian-language writers from Catalonia Alzueta, nevertheless, does not see them participating as writers, as creators of Catalan culture, but as readers, as Catalan citizens with an international profile, such as the best-selling author, Carlos Ruiz Zafón, who can attract an audience to whom they can then talk about Catalan literature, by which Alzueta means literature written in Catalan.

The initial insistence on the inclusion of Castilian-language writers by the Frankfurt Book Fair led members of the Catalan literary establishment to address publicly what they saw as an unfortunate lack of knowledge concerning Catalonia's history. As one commentator has noted, this issue is political, rather than cultural or literary: 'Si hi acudíssim com una cultura reconeguda de ple dret, amb un Estat independent i sobirà al darrere, aquesta discussió ens l'estavaliariem.'<sup>11</sup> As an example of the problem caused by Catalonia's statelessness, Baltasar Porcel comments not without frustration that: '[v]oy mucho por el mundo como escritor, pero jamás — o sea, en el 90% de casos — he logrado hacer entender y aceptar una nacionalidad cultural catalana o política de entera identidad social, etnológica e histórica exclusivas, como pretendemos en nuestro espacio interior.'<sup>12</sup>

To understand the language and literary debate, Catalan cultural commentators felt it necessary to explain certain historical and political factors which have shaped contemporary Catalonia. In an article entitled 'Frankfurt: manifest contra la confusió', Àlex Broch argues that 'Catalunya [...] té dos sistemes literaris, conseqüència de la seva herència històrica i política que deriva en una realitat lingüística i literària asimètrica'.<sup>13</sup> Broch then states that

L'anàlisi i l'estudi de la literatura universal mostren que a l'època de la colonització es produeix la superposició de la llengua de la metròpoli i el país colonitzador sobre la llengua i el país colonitzat. Els processos històrics de descolonització al llarg dels segles XIX i XX han fet emergir noves literatures de països descolonitzats que encara han de lluitar contra els estigmes de la colonització.<sup>14</sup>

Broch implies that Catalan and Castilian co-exist in Catalonia only because Castilian was imposed upon the Catalans as part of a process of cultural imperialism. Nevertheless, he stops short of declaring that Catalonia was colonized by Spain, arguing instead that 'llengües, literatures i cultures que no tenen un Estat [...] viuen processos socials i lingüístics semblants'.<sup>15</sup>

Broch's reluctance to describe Catalonia as a Spanish colony is perhaps understandable, as Catalonia could not be said to have experienced the conquest, political domination and economic exploitation typical of colonized countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Catalonia is, after all, one of the wealthiest and most industrialized regions of Spain and benefited economically from Spain's control of Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, until 1898, when Spain lost its remaining colonies in a war with the United States.<sup>16</sup> Despite these differences and Catalonia's collusion with Spanish imperialism, authors, critics and intellectuals have recently interpreted Spanish-Catalan relations within a colonial/postcolonial framework. The Catalan poet Joan Brossa and the journalist Víctor Alexandre, for example, describe Catalonia as Spain's last colony,<sup>17</sup> while the writer and intellectual, Maria-Aurèlia Capmany, attributes Catalonia's lack of independence to a process of 'colonització que hem sofert, intensament aquests darrers 37 anys [del franquisme], ampliament des del 1714'.<sup>18</sup>

Michael W. Doyle defines empire as:

a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, political collaboration, by economic, social or cultural dependence. Imperialism is simply the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire.<sup>19</sup>

Although it was slowly incorporated into the Spanish State through an on-going process of contact and intermingling of peoples and cultures from the fourteenth century onwards,<sup>20</sup> it can be argued, following Doyle's definition, that Catalonia has been dominated politically, culturally and linguistically by the Spanish State, which has, at times, used violence in its quest to maintain territorial and cultural unity. This colonization — in the eyes of Catalan nationalists — dates from the War of Spanish Succession, when the victorious Philip V sought to restructure the diverse political and judicial systems within his realm through the infamous *Decreto de Nueva Planta*.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, 1716 — the year the decree was proclaimed — marks 'la fi de Catalunya', as the Catalan governing bodies — the Generalitat, the *Diputació* and Barcelona town council — were abolished and replaced with the Real Audiencia del Principado de Cataluña and Catalan laws were abrogated in favour of the Castilian legal system.<sup>22</sup>

The objective of empire, however, was not simply the control of territories and economic resources by a foreign power; it also sought to colonize cultural spaces through a discourse which justified and legitimized control of particular territories.<sup>23</sup> In the case of Catalonia, cultural and linguistic colonization also dates from 1716, when, in addition to wresting political control from the Catalans themselves, the *Decreto de Nueva Planta* instituted Castilian as the mandatory language for all government correspondence, thus reinforcing Castilian linguistic hegemony and consigning Catalan to second-class status. The Decree was only the first large-scale attempt at Castilian linguistic hegemony. During the next 200 years numerous laws were passed which either banned the use of Catalan or limited its use in favour of Castilian in education, religious instruction, accounting and legal records and even the theatre.<sup>24</sup>

While these laws had a limited effect on Catalan society, the most sustained attempt at Spanish cultural imperialism occurred in the wake of the Spanish Civil War. It has been argued that the Civil War was not only a conflict between two social classes; it was also a struggle over different notions of Spain and Spanishness,<sup>25</sup> as Franco sought to eradicate or marginalize those cultural practices which did not conform to his understanding of a single national identity based on 'una sola lengua, el castellano, y una sola personalidad, la española'.<sup>26</sup> To this end, the use of Catalan in any form of communication — written or oral — was proscribed, and Catalans were, instead, exhorted to become part of this 'new' Spain by speaking 'la lengua del imperio'. The regime further sought to destroy anything that would impede the Catalans from becoming Spanish, as the regime saw it: hundreds of thousands of books in Catalan were burned in bonfires or pulped following the war and, in an attempt to change the very identity of Catalonia and Catalans, even baptismal and place names were Castilianized.<sup>27</sup>

For Maria-Aurèlia Capmany, this cultural and linguistic colonization was made possible by the 'gran prestigi de la literatura castellana (o espanyola?)' (Carbonell, p. 18), as the regime actively promoted Castilian as the language of culture in Catalonia through the establishment of important literary prizes awarded in the Catalan capital, including

the Nadal, Ciudad de Barcelona, Planeta and Juan Boscán prizes. Indeed, there is a direct correlation between the regime's cultural politics and the development of a vibrant Castilian-language literary scene in Catalonia, for, following the end of the Spanish Civil War, with many Catalan intellectuals and writers forced to live in exile in France and Latin America, writers who remained in Spain such as Sebastià Juan-Arbó, José María Gironella and Ignacio Agustí abandoned Catalan and adopted Castilian as their language of literary expression. While it is true that Castilian has been a language of culture in Catalonia since the Middle Ages, only a few Catalans who wrote in Castilian prior to the Civil War were considered part of the Castilian literary pantheon. This changed after the War, as numerous highly successful Castilian-language writers from Catalonia appeared, including the poets of the Barcelona School — José-Agustín Goytisolo, Carlos Barral, Jaime Gil de Biedma, Jaime Ferran, among others — and novelists Juan and Luis Goytisolo, Juan Marsé, Ana María Matute, and Francisco Candel. These writers are, according to Capmany, testament to the fact that 'la literatura espanyola (o castellana?) que es fa a Catalunya, València i les Illes no és més que la prova dels magnífics resultats d'una colonització' (Carbonell, p. 18).

The Franco regime's Castilian-centric policies, combined with the mass migration of poor Castilian speakers to Catalonia from the 1950s onwards, which by 1975 constituted 36.1% of Catalonia's population,<sup>28</sup> had a profound impact on Catalan society. According to Capmany, '[q]uan una cultura dominant, dotada d'aparell estatal, amb òrgans repressius a mà, s'imposa a una cultura vençuda, tant si es tracta de la cultura dominant anglesa com francesa, com espanyola-castellana, produeix una crisi profunda en el poble colonitzat' (Carbonell, pp. 19–20).

We can see this identity crisis in the late Terenci Moix's *El dia que va morir Marilyn* (1969), a ground-breaking novel which recounts the growing recovery and awareness of personal and cultural identities in a post-War generation of Catalan youth inculcated by a Francoist ideology, which proclaimed the superiority of all things Spanish and which denigrated Catalan culture and language. This lesson is so well learned that the central characters, Bruno and Jordi, describe their mother tongue as 'molt lletja' and lacking 'cap mira intel·lectual'.<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, their unquestioning acceptance of Catalan cultural and linguistic inferiority is challenged when they discover Salvador Espriu's beautifully-written, haunting and hopeful poems of exile and cross-cultural understanding in his 1960 collection, *La pell de brau*. These poems, in Bruno's words, '[E]ns despertav[en] una passió tota nova, una possibilitat d'emoció a partir d'aquella realitat que encara portàvem dintre, ofegada des de feia molts anys, però no pas morta' (p. 325). This new passion comes from the realization that they belong to a larger community which the Castilian-centric education system was designed to suppress:

Fins aleshores no se m'havia plantejat ni molt remotament el problema de pensar en una llengua i llegir i estudiar en una altra. [...] jo havia estat educat en una llengua que em condicionava, que em feia, en certa manera, allò que la llengua volia. Jo havia sentit parlar de les grans conquestes d'aquesta llengua estrangera [...] Tota la meua cultura m'havia estat transmesa amb paraules que no eren les mateixes del meu 'cada dia'. (pp. 326–27)

Denied history, his thoughts shaped by another language, Bruno experiences the postcolonial dislocation and fragmentation brought about by the disjuncture between the language of culture and that of his everyday existence.<sup>30</sup> In this light, we can see Bruno's proud reclaiming of his mother tongue as the first step in cultural resistance.

Postcolonial literatures are those that have ‘emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization and [have] asserted themselves by foregrounding the tension with the imperial power, and by emphasizing their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre’.<sup>31</sup> Maria-Aurèlia Capmany certainly sees the role of Catalan in this light when she claims that ‘[l]a nostra única forma de resistència contra el genocidi ha estat simplement no oblidar la nostra, de llengua, no oblidar cap de les seves múltiples possibilitats de bellesa’ (Carbonell, p. 20). Indeed, since Joaquim Rubió i Ors’s 1841 prologue cum manifesto to his collection, *Lo gayté del Llobregat*, writing in Catalan has been seen as a means of achieving cultural independence, of creating ‘una lliteratura propia y á part de la castellana’.<sup>32</sup>

The revival of Catalan as a language of high culture and the development of Catalan nationalism during the later part of the nineteenth century has been read as an anti-colonial struggle ‘to claim (or reclaim) the centrality of the language in Catalan cultural life and to recover Catalonia’s political institutions’ (Boada-Montagut 2003: 21). In nationalist thought, following three centuries of Catalan cultural decline, Castilian culture and language were considered to be ‘en detriment de la integritat i de l’evolució natural i pròpia del pensament català’,<sup>33</sup> and had to be excluded from Catalan cultural space in order that Catalans recover their original, unadulterated selves.<sup>34</sup> By excluding Castilian as a language of Catalan culture, the Catalan language became the defining feature of cultural expression, especially literary, and to ‘[t]rencar, transgredir, traspasar aquest límit és passar al no-res dins la literatura catalana. És a dir, deixa-hi de pertànyer. [...] És, doncs, l’únic límit al qual la “ideologia de la defensa” no pot renunciar, ni ara ni mai’.<sup>35</sup>

Language choice is a central and very polemical issue in postcolonial literatures, as represented in the differing positions on the role of French and English in African literatures taken by the Kenyan novelist, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, and the Nigerian writer, Chinua Achebe. In this debate, Ngugi equates language with cultural identity and maintains that whereas ‘the bullet was the means of physical subjugation [...], language was the means of spiritual subjugation’ through which the colonizers dominated ‘the mental universe of the colonized’,<sup>36</sup> such as that experienced by Bruno and Jordi’s generation in Moix’s *El dia que va morir Marilyn*. In this understanding, the language of the oppressor cannot represent the experience of the colonized; it is seen as élitist, as only a minority of educated Africans read foreign languages, and furthermore, in choosing to write in metropolitan languages, African languages are consigned to a second-class status. In contrast, Achebe recognizes that although English and French are clearly not African languages, he takes what he calls a pragmatic view, arguing that ‘[a] language spoken by Africans on African soil, a language in which Africans write, justifies itself’.<sup>37</sup> In this pragmatic approach, like it or not, French and English are, as a result of colonialism, a part of Africa’s linguistic reality. This does not mean, however, that they merely replicate European thought. Instead, in using the language of the oppressor to represent the experience of the colonized, Africans who write in English or French transform those languages, making them African.<sup>38</sup> In this sense, such writings constitute what Deleuze and Guattari describe as a ‘minor literature’, that is, a literature which is produced by a minority in a major language in order ‘to express another possible community and to forge the means for another consciousness and another sensibility’.<sup>39</sup>

This emblematic debate demonstrates that there is considerable disagreement about what constitutes postcolonial literature. In the Catalan context, postcolonial approaches, while recognizing the existence of other languages, tend to pass over the question of Catalans

who do not write in Catalan. For example, although there is a general acceptance that Catalan society is bilingual and pluricultural, it is generally taken for granted that Catalan literature is 'la escrita en catalán'.<sup>40</sup> This tacit recognition and exclusion of Castilian underscores an uneasy tension in postcolonial approaches to Catalan literature, as the inclusion of authors who write in the metropolitan language — in this case, Castilian — does not conform to the nationalist discourse from which Catalan postcolonial approaches derive. This tension is evident in Irene Boada-Montagut's book-length study on postcolonial readings of Catalan and Irish short stories by women. Boada-Montagut justifies her study of English-language texts by Irish writers on the grounds that the problem is 'not so much with language *per se*, as with how language is used' (p. 126). Given the almost total domination of the English language in Irish literary production, this would seem appropriate. Nevertheless, her approach to literature from Catalonia is different. Apart from raising the thorny question of Castilian-language writers when she ponders whether 'writings in Spanish, by Catalan writers, [can] be regarded as truly Catalan', Boada-Montagut simply does not engage with the works of Catalans who choose — that is, assuming they have a choice — to write in Castilian (p. 1). Thus, we can see that in constructing Catalonia as colonized, Catalan critics focus on a single understanding of colonization — that which maintains the nationalist assertion that language equals literary and cultural identity.

The processes by which nationalist anti-colonial discourse seeks to exclude the culture of the colonizers, such as we see in the case of Catalonia, has been questioned in postcolonial theories and studies. While recognizing that exclusion is a fundamental strategy in the struggle for independence, there is also a realization that 'the binary oppositions dear to the nationalist and imperialist enterprise' have disappeared through the experience of colonization (Said 1993: xxviii). 'Instead', Edward Said argues:

we begin to sense that old authority cannot simply be replaced by a new authority, but that new alignments made across borders, types, nations, and essences are rapidly coming into view, and it is those new alignments that now provoke and challenge the fundamentally static notion of *identity* that has been the core of cultural thought during the era of imperialism. (p. xxviii. Emphasis in original)

Following Said, the opposition between colonizing and colonized cultures and peoples is not so clear-cut as Catalan nationalism would have us believe. In a response to the accusation that Castilian-speaking immigrants have colluded, intentionally or not, in the Francoist castilianization of Catalonia, Francisco Candel, author of the best-selling *Els altres catalans*, writes that

Els colonitzadors no han portat mai del tot l'esperit del propi país allà on s'han establert. Gairebé sempre la terra que han provat de fer seva els ha absorbit. I quan han portat les coses a extrems brutals i han aconseguit la destrucció de l'antic poble que vivia als terrenys per ells envaïts, ha sorgit una nova civilització, una mena d'esperit i de raça nous, més propers al terrenys conquerits que no pas al que havien abandonat.<sup>41</sup>

Candel's extended defence of immigration to Catalonia is not only an attempt to explain to Catalans the historical, social and economic reasons why Castilian-speaking immigrants have arrived in large numbers since the 1950s, and the benefits brought to Catalonia by immigration; it can also be read as an attempt to redefine Catalan identity. Long before

theories of cultural hybridity became fashionable, Candel recognized that colonization is not only uni-directional, but that through cultural contact and conflict old cultures are transformed and new ones emerge. In so doing, Candel echoes Homi Bhabha's theory of cultural change in his discussion of 'third spaces'. Rather than focus on recovering an original, pre-colonial culture that has been adulterated through contact with the colonizing culture, Bhabha argues for a third space, that is, a new hybrid space which is formed by the convergence of two or more cultures.<sup>42</sup>

Candel's recognition that the colonizers are transformed by their contact with colonized spaces and peoples is useful as a means of locating Castilian-language writers from Catalonia within Catalan society. Even a brief examination of these writers will show that they also experience — and write about — a profound sense of cultural dislocation and difference, bilingualism, and marginalization associated with the crisis of identity in postcolonial subjects. Rather than seeing Castilian-language writers as complicit in the erasure of Catalan culture (Capmany) or simply ignoring them because they do not conform to the parameters of Catalan nationalist discourse (Boada-Montagut), such writers have perhaps suffered most from the most recent form of Spanish imperialism — the Franco regime. In the first volume of his autobiography, Juan Goytisolo,<sup>43</sup> for example, recounts how he and his brothers lost their mother tongue, quite literally, when his Catalan-speaking mother was killed during a war which has been described as part of the violent Spanish colonial project (Boada-Montagut 2003: 3). This brutal act and the Francoist repression of Catalan profoundly influenced Goytisolo's literary identity as he had little option but to write in Castilian. As a consequence, Goytisolo describes his situation and that of his fellow Castilian-language writers from Catalonia as:

periférica y marginal por partida doble. En Madrid, se nos suele considerar erróneamente catalanes, como a Alberti andaluz, Bergamín vasco o Cela gallego. Pero nuestros colegas y paisanos no nos acogen, con razón, en su gremio en la medida en que la actitud fundamental nuestra — la escritura — engarza con una lengua y cultura distintas de las que los identifican a ellos. Catalanes en Madrid y castellanos en Barcelona, nuestra ubicación es ambigua y contradictoria, amenazada de ostracismo por ambos lados y enriquecida no obstante, por el mutuo rechazo, con los dones preciosos del desarraigo y movilidad. (p. 37)

Hybrid, marginalized, an outsider living on the borders between two firmly established cultural traditions, Goytisolo appears to embody the most celebrated aspects of the postcolonial experience.

Another more recent writer who also sees herself as a cultural and linguistic hybrid, 'una escritora desterrada', is Nuria Amat, author of the acclaimed novels *El país del alma*, *La intimidad* and *Reina de América*.<sup>44</sup> Amat's linguistic history is complex and like the Goytisolo brothers also involves the death of her mother. In her collection of essays, *Letra herida* — the very title of which is borrowed from the Catalan, *lletraferit*, Amat writes that she was two years old when her mother died and this event left her mute. When she did begin to speak, she did so not in her family's language, Catalan, but in Castilian. According to Amat, Castilian became her adopted language, her step-mother tongue. Although for her family, Castilian was 'el idioma de Franco, el idioma de los españoles, el otro idioma, el impuesto y casi ajeno' (p. 139), Amat's experience of Castilian is rather different. She came to Castilian through Latin American literature, a literature which contained '[v]oces que hablaban un castellano que me sonaba tan bastardo como el mío'.<sup>45</sup> Rather than identifying

Castilian as a central(ist) pillar of the Francoist ‘one, free and great Spain’, Amat read in the works of Borges, Onetti, Rulfo, Fuentes, García Márquez, Paz and Lezama Lima ‘[v]oces que [...] tenían más de lucha heroica e irónica rebeldía que de sumisión al poder del habla castellana. [...] Voces que hablaban a la lengua y desestimaban la fuerza de la patria’ (‘Lengua’: 5). While Isabel Clara Simó believes that the ‘pàtria d’un escriptor és la seva llengua’,<sup>46</sup> for Amat, language is ‘[a]jena a propietarios y patrias’ (‘Lengua’: 1). A writer’s language is not national, but personal, a language which the writer must make her own. In *Letra herida*, Amat describes the language she speaks thus:

Es híbrida. Es bastarda. Es mestiza. Es catalana (¿blanda?). ¿O pura y dura castellana? Es española (tibia). Es árabe (me llamo nur-ia). Es gitana. Canastera. Enfebrecida. Dicharachera. Muda. Deslenguada (eso me gusta). Es tímida y a veces huérfana. Es polémica. También rebelde. Es andaluza (¡Olé!) y moreneta (¡Visca!). Es de mar y montaña. Es impura. Y atravesada. Muy latina (mi apellido la canta). Y por eso hispana. De Colombia, de Perú, Nicaragua y Argentina. Es gachupina. Y sorda. Y rara. Y de virgen negra o violada. Es libresca. Copiada de los libros vivos. Robada a las novelas sabias. Y francesa (por demasiada lectura). A veces sueña que sabe inglés y consigue disfrazar la erudición en verso. Es interior. Popular. Desobediente. Herida. Poemática (¿existirá esta palabra?). Desterrada. Judía y alemana. Perdida. Desgraciada. Luminosa. Rica y pobre. [...] Es tuya y mía. Es, por supuesto, prestada. Por eso la invento cada día como si fuera una lengua personal, semisecreta y desclasada. (p. 162)

This hybrid and rebellious language — ‘minor’ in Deleuzian terms — is typical of Castilian-language writers from Catalonia, such as Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, Eduardo Mendoza, Juan Marsé, and so forth. For example, in Luis Goytisolo’s 1973 novel, *Recuento*, the author peppers his text with Catalan words and phrases, such as when he describes Catalonia as a ‘noble tierra sin nobleza, condado sin conde, principat sin príncipe, estat sin tierra y tierra sin estat, capitalidad decapitada, patria sin cabeza, ligada una vez más de pies y manos a los pies de España’.<sup>47</sup> Goytisolo’s use of Catalanisms goes beyond local colour, such as in the regionalist novels of the Valencian writer, Vicente Blasco Ibáñez. In the above quotation the Catalan words — *principat* and *estat* — mark the presence of another culture, suggesting that the sovereignty that once resided in the Catalan language is now subsumed under the Castilian ‘España’. In chapters seven and eight of this long, rambling novel, Goytisolo intersperses the history of Catalonia within Spain throughout the story of *Recuento*’s protagonist, Raúl. Catalonia, in Goytisolo’s reading of its history, has suffered violent conquest and cultural schizophrenia, as it has been silenced through dispossession, centralization, historical revisionism and linguistic imperialism (pp. 234–35, 434). In his revisionist history, Goytisolo challenges the nationalist myths of the linguistic, cultural and historical unity of the Spanish nation-state in the very language in which those myths are written — Castilian.

The refusal to engage with Catalans who write in Castilian by critics who apply postcolonial theories to the Catalan context indicates a continued adherence to a largely unreconstructed nationalism, and in this sense, in their present form, these postcolonial approaches do little more than wrap Catalan nationalism in theoretically fashionable packaging. Rather than questioning the binary oppositions between colonizers and colonized, between Castilian- and Catalan-language cultures, which is a central objective of postcolonial theories, Catalan postcolonial approaches simply reverse these binaries and the nationalist understanding of Catalan identity remains stable and largely unchallenged. The responses to the invitation to the Frankfurt Book Fair underscore that the Catalan language

still remains the defensive line — the border — that supposedly protects Catalans from cultural oblivion.

However, while nationalism sees borders as separating peoples, places and cultures,<sup>48</sup> postcolonial theorists remind us that borders are also the places where they are joined. According to Homi Bhabha, the border is a space where the conventional distinction between inside/outside, same/different, us/them is blurred. They are ‘in-between spaces [that] provide the terrain of elaborating strategies of selfhood — singular or communal — that initiate news signs of identity’.<sup>49</sup>

Although Catalan postcolonial approaches display an awareness of the dangers of an uncritical acceptance of nationalist discourse, particularly in regard to the exclusion of women, such as in the work of Irene Boada-Montagut and Montserrat Palau Vergés, there has been little attempt to explore and theorize hybrid Catalan identities. Writers like Amat and Goytisolo may owe their existence as Castilian-language writers to the practices of internal cultural colonization; it does not follow, nevertheless, that these writers necessarily replicate those practices or that they are complicit in the erasure of Catalan culture. Instead, they occupy a liminal space along the border between Spanish and Catalan cultures, across which they and their works constantly move and negotiate. An exploration of these writers and their work within a Catalan context at the Frankfurt Book Fair has the potential to suggest ways of thinking beyond fixed notions of cultural inclusion and exclusion to create new understandings of contemporary Catalan society, literary production and, hence, Catalan identities.

<sup>1</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1993), p. xxviii.

<sup>2</sup> Frankfurt Book Fair, “‘La cultura catalana’ to be Book Fair Guest of Honour in 2007” <[http://www.frankfurt-book-fair.com/en/index.php?content=en/presse\\_pr/pressemitteilungen/details/10675/ontent.html](http://www.frankfurt-book-fair.com/en/index.php?content=en/presse_pr/pressemitteilungen/details/10675/ontent.html)> [accessed 22 May 2006] (para 2 of 3).

<sup>3</sup> <[e-barcelona.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=5173](http://e-barcelona.org/modules.php?op=modload&name=News&file=article&sid=5173)> [accessed 21 December 2005] (para 2 of 3); quoted by Caterina Mieras.

<sup>4</sup> The exception is the late Manuel Vázquez Montalbán, who wrote a musical, *Flor de nit*, in Catalan.

<sup>5</sup> To compound the mistake, the communiqué refers to Joan Miró by the Castilian form of his name, Juan.

<sup>6</sup> Cristian Segura, ‘Els editors alemanys volen la cultura catalana bilingüe’, in *Avui*, 27 June 2005 <<http://www.avui.cat/avui/diari/05/jun/27/18439.htm>> [accessed 30 December 2005] (para 1 of 8).

<sup>7</sup> D. Sam Abrams, ‘Tots els Graves a Frankfurt!’ *Avui*, 5 May 2005, <<http://www.avui.com/avui/diari/05/mai/05/c10105.htm>> [accessed 30 December 2005] (para 1 of 9).

<sup>8</sup> Jaume Cabré, ‘Frankfurt’, in *Avui*, 22 May 2005 <<http://www.avui.com/avui/diari/05/mai/22/c10122.htm>> [accessed 30 December 2005] (para 8 of 8).

<sup>9</sup> Isidor Cònsul, ‘Per què ens fa por la literatura’, in *Avui*, 20 March 2005 <[www.avui.cat/avui/diari/05/mar/20/c10120.htm](http://www.avui.cat/avui/diari/05/mar/20/c10120.htm)> [accessed 23 May 2006] (para 3 of 5).

<sup>10</sup> Jordi Capdevila, ‘Els autors en castellà han de fer d’ambaixadors del català. Entrevista: Miquel Alzueta. Editor de Columna’, in *Avui*, 6 June 2005 <<http://www.avui.com/avui/diari/05/jun/06/360106.htm>> [accessed 30 December 2005] (para 2 of 8).

<sup>11</sup> Eva Piquer, ‘A Frankfurt en avió. Miquel de Palol, Jaume Cabré, Josep Piera i Sebastià Alzamora reconverteixen un debat sobre literatura en un toc d’alerta respecte al desembarcament català a la fira alemanya del 2007’, in *Avui*, 10 April 2005 <<http://www.avui.com/avui/diari/05/abr/10/630110.htm>> [accessed 30 December 2005] (para 6 of 9).

<sup>12</sup> Baltasar Porcel, ‘La cuestión colonial’, *La Vanguardia*, 28 October 2005, p. 27.

<sup>13</sup> Àlex Broch, ‘Frankfurt: manifest contra la confusió’, in *Avui*, 31 May 2005 <<http://www.avui.com/avui/diari/05/mai/31/c10131.htm>> [accessed 30 December 2005] (para 5 of 25).

<sup>14</sup> Broch 2005: para 11 of 25.

<sup>15</sup> Broch 2005: para 12 of 25.

<sup>16</sup> See Josep Fontana Làzaro, 'Comercio colonial e industrialización: una reflexión sobre los orígenes de la industria moderna en Cataluña', in *Agricultura, comercio colonial y crecimiento económico en la España contemporánea. Actes del primer coloquio de historia económica de España (Barcelona, 11-12 de mayo de 1972)*, ed. by Jordi Nadal and Gabriel Tortella (Barcelona: Ariel, 1974), pp. 358-65 (p. 358).

<sup>17</sup> Víctor Alexandre, *Jo no sóc espanyol* (Barcelona: Proa, 1999), p. 346.

<sup>18</sup> Jordi Carbonell, 'Escriure en castellà a Catalunya', *Taula de canvi*, 6 (1977), 5-42 (p. 18).

<sup>19</sup> Michael W. Doyle, *Empires* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), p. 45.

<sup>20</sup> Kathryn Cramer, *Language, the Novelist and National Identity in Post-Franco Catalonia* (Oxford: Legenda, 2000), p. 118.

<sup>21</sup> Irene Boada-Montagut, *Women Write Back: Irish and Catalan Short Stories in Colonial Context* (Dublin/Portland, OR: Irish Academic Press, 2003), p. 21.

<sup>22</sup> *Història dels Països Catalans*, ed. by Albert Balcells, 3 vols (Barcelona: Edhasa, 1980-1981), III (1981), 15.

<sup>23</sup> Peter Brooker, *A Concise Glossary of Cultural Theory* (London: Arnold, 1999), p. 170.

<sup>24</sup> Francesc Ferrer i Gironès, *La persecució política de la llengua catalana. Història de les mesures preses contra el seu ús des de la Nova Planta fins avui* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1985), pp. 35-107; Josep Benet, *L'intent franquista de genocidi cultural contra Catalunya* (Barcelona: Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, 1995), p. 26.

<sup>25</sup> Carolyn P. Boyd, 'History, Politics, and Culture, 1936-1975', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Spanish Culture*, ed. by David T. Gies (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 86-103 (p. 86).

<sup>26</sup> Francisco Franco Bahamonde, *Palabras del Caudillo. 19 abril 1937-31 diciembre 1938* (Barcelona: Fe, 1939), p. 226.

<sup>27</sup> Daniele Conversi, *The Basques, the Catalans and Spain: Alternative Routes to Nationalist Mobilisation* (London: Hurst & Company, 1997), p. 111. The destruction of Catalan cultural products and the prohibition on speaking the language and writing books in Catalan were not maintained throughout the entire dictatorship. Nevertheless, the regime did place strict restrictions on the publication of books in Catalan through censorship and severely curtailed the teaching of Catalan at school. See Norman L. Jones, 'The Catalan Question Since the Civil War', in *Spain in Crisis: The Evolution and Decline of the Franco regime*, ed. by Paul Preston (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1976), pp. 234-67; Jo Labanyi, 'Censorship and the Fear of Mass Culture', in *Spanish Cultural Studies: An Introduction. The Struggle for Modernity*, ed. by Helen Graham and Jo Labanyi (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 207-14 (p. 213).

<sup>28</sup> Miquel Strubell i Trueta, 'La immigració', in *Sociolingüística i llengua catalana*, ed. by Albert Bastardas and Josep Soler (Barcelona: Empúries, 1988), pp. 46-77 (p. 58).

<sup>29</sup> Terenci Moix, *El dia que va morir Marilyn. Edició definitiva* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1995), p. 160.

<sup>30</sup> Montserrat Roig writes of a similar personal experience she had:

La revelació que existia una llengua 'real' em va venir als quatre anys, quan les monges m'obligaven a llegir una paraules que no entenia [...] Creia que les monges inventaven una llengua per a dominar el territori del meu jo i les meves paraules. Eren el poder. I el que elles havien inventat ja no tenia res a veure amb la meua magia. Mai 'una mesa' podia ser una 'Taula'. Era una altra cosa que no significava res perquè jo havia perdut la força del conjur. M'havia convertit, en certa manera, en una autista. Així neix la diglossia que encara estem patint els que no vam ser educats en català; la llengua parlada i la llegua escrita entren en fricció i fan perdre, als parlants, capacitat d'expressió.

See Montserrat Roig, *Digues que m'estimes encara que sigui mentida* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1991), pp. 37-38.

<sup>31</sup> Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> Joaquim Rubió i Ors, *Lo gaytè del Llobregat. Poesias de don Joaquim Rubió y Ors* (Barcelona: Estampa de Joseph Rubio, 1841), p. ix.

<sup>33</sup> Joan Maragall, *Obres completes*, 2 vols (Barcelona: Selecta, 1960), I, 740.

<sup>34</sup> Enric Prat de la Riba, 'L'unitat de Catalunya', in *La Veu de Catalunya*, 18 October 1906, p. 1.

<sup>35</sup> Àlex Broch, *Literatura catalana dels anys setanta*, (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1980), p. 112.

<sup>36</sup> Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (London: James Currey, 1986), pp. 9, 16.

<sup>37</sup> Chinua Achebe, *Morning Yet on Creation Day* (London: Heinemann, 1975), p. 67.

<sup>38</sup> For an overview of this debate, see Ismael S. Talib, *The Language of Postcolonial Literatures: An Introduction*, (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 90–94.

<sup>39</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, trans. by Dana Polan (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 17.

<sup>40</sup> Montserrat Palau Vergés, 'Autoras catalanas: doble marginación y doble rebelión (género y nacionalismo en Cataluña)', in *Identidades multiculturais: revisión dos discursos teóricos*, ed. by Ana Bringas López and Belén Martín Lucás (Vigo: Universidade de Vigo, 2000), pp. 169–76 (p. 174).

<sup>41</sup> Francisco Candel, *Els altres catalans* (Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1964), p. 32.

<sup>42</sup> Homi Bhabha, 'The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha', in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference*, ed. by Jonathan Rutherford (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), pp. 207–21 (p. 211). While Candel does act as Devil's advocate, questioning fixed notions of who and what is Catalan, he ultimately favours cultural assimilation whereby the children and grandchildren of the Castilian-speaking immigrants will become Catalan. See Stewart King, *Escribir la catalanidad. Lengua e identidades culturales en la narrativa contemporánea de Cataluña* (Suffolk: Tamesis, 2005), pp. 94–102.

<sup>43</sup> Juan Goytisolo, *Coto vedado* (Barcelona: Seix Barral, 1985), p. 37.

<sup>44</sup> Nuria Amat, *Letra herida* (Madrid: Alfaguara, 1998), p. 137.

<sup>45</sup> Nuria Amat, 'Lengua de dos orillas', unpublished manuscript, p. 5. I would like to express my sincere thanks to Nuria Amat for providing me with a copy of this manuscript.

<sup>46</sup> <<http://www.avui.com/avui/diari/05/mai/16/30116.htm>> [accessed 30 December 2005] (para 1 of 2); Isabel-Clara Simó, 'Frankfurt', in *Avui*, 16 May 2005.

<sup>47</sup> Luis Goytisolo, *Recuento. Antagonía 1* (Madrid: Alianza, 1987), pp. 288–89.

<sup>48</sup> Anne Brewster, *Literary Formations: Post-Colonialism, Nationalism, Globalism* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1995), p. 13.

<sup>49</sup> Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 1.