

## **Javier Daulte's *Little Red Riding Hood*: Performance and Identity in Barcelona**

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Within the last decade, one of the most visible Argentine theatre practitioners in Barcelona has been Javier Daulte (1963, Buenos Aires). Since his initial contact in 1999, Daulte has integrated into the theatre system to such a degree that his work has come to be seen as emblematic of the Argentine theatre presence in the city. He has worked across the entire theatre spectrum, with both Argentine and Catalan practitioners, ranging from theatre students to iconic Catalan theatre groups such as La Fura dels Baus (*Metamorfosis*, 2005), and T de Teatre (*Com pot ser que t'estimi tant?*, 2007).

Daulte's methodology developed out of his involvement with Caraja-ji,<sup>1</sup> a collaborative theatre group whose work, drawing on chaos and catastrophe theorems, prioritised the body of the actor and sought to challenge and fragment binary structures in order to create multiplicity, disorder and ambiguity. The proponents of this group formed the core of the theatre movement that has become known as 'el teatro de la desintegración' [theatre of disintegration]. Rooted in and influenced by parodic, expressionist and absurdist traditions, the movement's aesthetics include largely pessimistic themes such as gratuitous violence, the absence of love, social disintegration and sociolinguistic conflicts.

While Daulte can be situated within this movement, there are aspects of his work which distinguish him from other practitioners. He has developed his approach to theatre through a series of theory-based essays entitled *Juego y compromiso* [Game and Commitment] (unpublished). Drawing on Alain Badiou he contextualises his own position by outlining the problematics that he sees with so-called "serious" or politicised theatre in a postmodern setting. However,

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<sup>1</sup> The other members of Caraja-ji were Carmen Arrieta, Alejandro Tantanián, Rafael Spregelburg, Alejandro Robino, Alejandro Zingman, Jorge Leyes and Ignacio Apolo.

whilst didactic seriousness is to be avoided, Daulte's approach is not intended to be either irresponsible or trivial. In discussing the importance of the ludic element of his methodology, he suggests that ludic play invokes a spirit of festival, a celebration, and it is this element of fun that allows for an audience to engage in serious discussion after the performance: 'La reflexión es un paso que se vuelve inevitable si uno lo pasó bien, no de otra manera'[The process of reflection only becomes inevitable if one has had a good time] (Daulte and América Late, 2009, 3). This ludic element may only function well when it exists alongside and in accordance with total commitment to a particular set of indefinable game rules. Daulte argues that when taken to the extreme, this dualism between play and commitment is capable of generating an ephemeral reality, a "truth" which is valid within the performance moment, dependent upon the performance context as well as intelligent audience interpretation. The undefined limits of the game allow for a plurality of responses and readings, a freedom from political subjugation that allows theatre to be an act of infinite possibilities.

Daulte's working relationship with Barcelona has been forged through the opportunities offered by Catalan theatre festivals alongside a number of significant theatre contacts, particularly Gabriela Izcovich<sup>2</sup> who introduced him to the Sala Beckett, resulting in a long-lasting, productive collaboration. In 2005 Daulte's production of *Ets aquí?* [Are you there?] at the Romea theatre established a connection with the influential owners of the Romea, the Focus Group. In recent years Focus' role in the maintenance of Catalan theatre infrastructure has become increasingly more important: it is now one of the largest firms, not only within Catalonia, but also within the Spanish state, that is actively involved in supporting theatrical production. In 2006 Focus invited Daulte to take on the position of artistic director at the Villarroel theatre, sister theatre of the Romea and part of the Focus Group. Daulte's appointment to this role, which he undertook from 2006 until 2010,

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<sup>2</sup> Gabriela Izcovich (Buenos Aires: 1960) is an actress and theatre director who has been active both in Buenos Aires and in Barcelona. She has worked on a regular basis with Daulte.

marked a key moment not only in terms of his relationship with Focus, but also in terms of a broader symbolic integration into the Catalan theatre sphere. The fact that Daulte, a Castilian-speaking outsider, was offered this role can be seen as a challenge to the cultural language-binary discourse.

Tucked away, outside of the main theatre district, the Villarroel feels both temporary and makeshift. In 2005, struggling to survive, the theatre was bought out by Focus, whose decision to appoint Daulte as artistic director reflects an enterprising pragmatism: the input of an energetic, dynamic outsider might just provide the necessary level of rejuvenation. In implementing his artistic agenda, Daulte remains faithful to his own philosophical approach to theatre (displaying his ten points on theatre across the theatre entrance) but he is simultaneously keen to embrace the local. Throughout his time at the Villarroel he works to increase the visibility of young, contemporary Catalan practitioners, staging, for example, the works of Jordi Casanovas and Carol López. He also helps to increase the overall visibility of Catalan actors by incorporating well-known figures with television profiles, such as Joel Joan and Clara Segura, alongside lesser-known actors. The influence of Daulte's working methods can be seen both in the actors and the playwrights that collaborate with him at the Villarroel. The ludic aspects of Daulte's theatre approach are particularly evident in the bilingual, playful work of Carol López. It is therefore highly significant that, once Daulte turns down a contract renewal, it is López who takes on the artistic directorship of the Villarroel. This demonstrates not only Focus' confidence in Daulte's style, but also Daulte's success in bringing greater visibility to young Catalan practitioners. In terms of gender politics, López' appointment is also highly significant, as she is now the only female artistic director of all of the major theatres in the city.

The following case study examines an artistic collaboration between Daulte and López: the 2010 Catalan production of Daulte's *Tres dones i un llop* (an adaptation of *Little Red Riding Hood* "for grownups"). The analysis will focus on Daulte's two points of emphasis: the role of the mother and the trope of monstrosity, as a means of examining ways in which the play might be read in the Catalan cultural context. In looking specifically at the 2010 Catalan

production of the play, this article engages, not only with Daulte's impact on Catalan theatre but also with his ongoing legacy at the Villarroel: the production takes place in López's first season as artistic director and although Daulte had initially planned to bring the Argentine production to the theatre, it was eventually decided that López should direct a Catalan version of the play, thereby bringing the two practitioners together in a transatlantic theatre project. Daulte's take on *Little Red Riding Hood* was first performed as *Caperucita* in Buenos Aires in August, 2009. The Catalan version - *Tres dones i un llop* – was premiered at the Villarroel in April 2010.<sup>3</sup>

Within the history of fairytale rewriting, versions of *Little Red Riding Hood* have been particularly prevalent, reaching far beyond their European origins. In fact, Daulte was first motivated to produce his theatre version having come across *Erase 21 Caperucitas* [Once upon 21 times Little Red Riding Hood], a Spanish translation of a set of Japanese re-workings of the tale (Daulte and Blanc, 2009). Although the story of *Little Red Riding Hood* has a significant oral history that dates back to medieval times, the first known written version, authored by Charles Perrault, was published in France in 1697. Whereas the fluidity of the oral form avoided overt didacticism and thereby encouraged audience participation in the meaning-making process, the early written versions relied upon rationalist explanations, transforming the story into a stringent, moral fable that warned girls of the perils of disobedience: Perrault's *Le Petit Chaperon rouge* was

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<sup>3</sup> Play synopsis. Set in the twenty-first century, this version of the fairytale examines the relationship between three generations of women. The infirm grandmother of the traditional tale (Eloísa who is often referred to as Elo) is confined to a hospital bed, following major surgery. She is visited by her granddaughter (Sílvia), the Little Red Riding Hood of the play, who is a late adolescent struggling to find the right way forwards. Her love for her grandmother is contrasted by her tense relationship with her mother (Cora), a seemingly irresponsible alcoholic. The wolf of the story (Víctor) appears as a middle-aged man, whose unrequited love for the granddaughter develops into a dark obsession. In order to attain Sílvia's love he murders Elo and covers himself in her skin. In the form of Elo he is about to 'devour' Sílvia but is prevented from doing so by Cora who shoots him dead. The Catalan version also includes an additional "happy ending" for each of the three women.

succeeded by other, often male-narrated conservative retellings (including the Brothers Grimm version in 1812) that fail to problematise myths about rape, but rather as cultural theorist Jack Zipes notes ‘they make women willing participants in their own defeat, obscure the true nature of rape by implying women want to be raped and assert the supreme rightness of male power either as offender or protector’ (1993, 325). This inscription of patriarchal values has been further heightened by the early illustrations of the story: ‘the girl in the encounter with the Wolf gazes but really does not gaze, for she is the image of male desire’ (Zipes in Day, 1998, 148).



Illustration by Gustave Dore (1832– 1883)

This perpetuation of patriarchal myth is significant, for as Hirsch notes, ‘the myths we read and take to be basic determine our vision of how individual subjects are formed in relation to familial structures’ (1989, 2). Zipes goes on to propose that the tale continues to be provocative because it raises questions about ‘gender identity, sexuality, violence, and the civilizing process’, subjects which ‘are crucial for establishing principles of social justice and gender equality’ (Zipes, 1993, 343). Each retelling of the tale is therefore closely linked to shifts in societal understanding of these issues.

Daulte's investigation of the mother and the monster effectively provides a framework for questioning societal constructs within the Argentinean context, and Lopéz then reworks the play to speak in a more direct manner to the local Catalan landscape. The fairytale genre offers an appropriately critical lens, for as Gamble suggests, 'in a modern period where "the mythologies of advanced industrialised countries" are disseminated through a global media, fairytale's willingness to adapt to suit the specific circumstantial has never been more valuable' (1997, 130).

Daulte's version can be seen to follow on from radical early postmodern re-writings of the twentieth century, heralded by Anne Sexton's *Transformations* (1971) and Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber* (1979). Carter set out to challenge the inscription of misogynistic ideology in the early written versions of the myth. *The Bloody Chamber* is a collection of stories about fairytales, rewritings that refuse escapism, rather offering a critical, sometimes ironical response to 'the gender politics and the intimately related class politics of experience' looking at the way in which, centuries after Perrault, societal experience continues to be 'fundamentally structured in gendered terms' (Day, 1998, 134). Carter explores gender through tropes such as the fierce, the gothic, and the erotic, embracing postmodernist concepts in order to generate blurred and ambiguous boundaries. Gamble comments that Carter's approach is particularly helpful in 'the interrogation of master narratives and, particularly, of the divergences between the roles male and female are permitted to play within them' (1997, 138).

Like Carter, Daulte sets out to challenge gender, sexual and identity constructs, adapting a pluralist approach that is, in fact, more closely aligned to the moral ambivalence of the oral tradition. The transgression against the form of the early male narratives also enables a plethora of female voices to emerge, following on from Carter in the conscious recovering of 'a female tradition of storytelling' (Gamble, 1997, 131). Whereas the Perrault and the Brothers Grimm versions gloss over the role of the mother, Daulte's version problematises it and in so doing he is able to examine the marginal incoherent body of the mother, the postmodern ambivalence of the maternal, the position

of motherhood within patriarchy and the concept of the postcolonial body as other.

Daulte's first point of departure is a questioning of the mother-daughter relationship construct. He asks why Little Red Riding Hood's mother, in the classic written versions, does not go to visit her seriously-ill mother, but rather sends her daughter, despite the dangers she may have to face along the way (in Rago, 2009). Daulte takes these three generations of women in order to interrogate the problematic relationships that exist between them. The audience soon ascertain that there are multiple renderings of the mother-daughter relationship within the play. Cora is Sílvia's biological mother and Eloísa is Cora's biological mother and yet the interaction between mothers and daughters is fraught with tension: in each case the mother demonstrates both resentment and inability or reluctance to nurture. In contrast Elo plays a devoted mothering role towards her granddaughter Sílvia and this is mirrored by Sílvia's sacrificial maternal care of Cora, and later of Elo. However, even these alternative mother-daughter relationships are far from straightforward: human interaction in the play is characterised by ambivalence and miscommunication.

Within the development of feminist theory the figure of the mother has been a central and yet contested figure. Simone de Beauvoir's early seminal work, *The Second Sex* (1949), developed an anti-patriarchal response to maternity, employing horrifying images to describe the violation of copulation and the subsequent alienation caused by pregnancy: the 'hostile element' that is 'locked inside them' (2009, 43). The woman resists this bodily experience, her 'enslavement to the species' (49), specifically because, as Scarth points out, of the manner in which it is 'reproduced illegitimately within patriarchy' (2004, 142). Scarth goes on to explain that 'what concerns power is not whether pregnancy is a biologically normal process, but the way in which it is constructed as socially normal' (142). The second wave feminist theory that follows on from Beauvoir examines the societal reproduction of the mothering process, critiquing patriarchal constructs in order to challenge gender constructs. However, Evans suggests that with the onset of psychoanalytical feminist criticism the mother remains 'a deeply

conflicted figure, projected as capable of healing feminism's rifts but also bringing into feminism an otherness that divides it against itself' (Evans, 1998, 7). A position of the mother has been further complicated by postmodernity as the idea of a unitary feminist identity becomes ever more disrupted. Most significantly, the body of the mother remains 'other' because of the perpetuation of a patriarchal discourse that refuses to grant women autonomy as individuals.

Rather than attempt to simplify the position of the maternal within postmodern society, both Daulte and Lopéz embrace its complexity, allowing the performance to provide multiple readings that clearly intersect with the role of the maternal within the Catalan cultural space. The marked impact of patriarchy upon the lives of Elo, Cora and Sílvia reflects the cultural-historical landscape of both Argentina and Spain in which twentieth-century dictatorships worked to reinstate deeply patriarchal systems. Kantaris notes that the military dictatorship in Argentina unleashed a despotic violence which 'is perceived to be bound up with a complex of masculine power and identity within which "woman" becomes the central yet excluded or disavowed term' (in Boufis Filou, 2009, 4). This gender violence is mirrored in the Franco dictatorship which put the feminist movement of the early decades of the twentieth century on hold. The sex-gender system seemed to be radically changing, with suffrage being extended to all women in 1933 and divorce and abortion being legalised in 1932 and 1936 respectively. However, right-wing victory ended the civil war bringing a regime that endeavoured to impose 'from 1939 to 1975, a patriarchal culture in which women, officially equated with a maternal function that grants them identity solely as mothers' were 'hindered in forming relationships as individuals' (Arkininstall, 2002, 47). This interrelationship of a history of cultural and gender repression in Argentina and Spain helps Daulte's play to travel across transatlantic cultural difference. At the same time, the fluidity of the play's construction of meaning allows a Barcelona audience not only to make potential connections with Argentine history but also to review how the play might continue to produce signifiers within the Barcelona context. The long immersion in patriarchy, which has been further compounded in the Catalan case by other forms of cultural repression, can be seen to continue to impact gender roles within the



contemporary period. Furthermore, McDonogh argues that Catalan culture, as a separate entity from Spanish culture, is also steeped in patriarchal values that have pervaded into the infrastructure of the post-dictatorship period (1989, 60). Even though the transition to democracy began to challenge the legal bases of male dominance, patriarchal ideology continues to impact upon Catalan society and physical violence against women is not decreasing: this is clearly demonstrated by the recorded figures of male-perpetrated domestic violence in Catalonia.<sup>4</sup>

The play presents an immediate challenge to the patriarchal system through the absence of the father figure. This defiance of the heterosexual marriage norm: 'the concept and reality of the single mother, generates intense fear, anger, and a threat to men [...] mothers without men are the patriarchy's worst nightmare' (Dowd, 1997, pp47-48). The absence of men in the home is also reflected in Barcelona by rising numbers of single mothers in the city<sup>5</sup>. However, the dysfunctionality in the home, which we see in the play, suggests that the women are caught within a patriarchal discourse that refutes the autonomy of the single mother. In response to the fear that single motherhood provokes, patriarchy inscribes the single mother as a 'failure and an aberration' (Dowd, 1997, p47). In the opening hospital sequence, the audience is presented with an image of dilapidation and weakness that is mirrored throughout the performance by a home life that is perpetually on the point of collapse.

Cora rejects her culturally-dictated mothering role of *Sílvia*, seeking after an identity that does not reduce her to the mothering function. Questioning the patriarchal system, she refutes the all-important dyad of the mother-daughter bond (Daniels, 2000, 95). However, despite this defiance she finds autonomy neither within nor beyond the home, spending her days 'in a state of nervousness and bitterness; she always loses on some level' (Beauvoir, 2009, 584). Most significantly, she cannot prevent herself from chasing after the patriarchal myth of male protection: her continual, ineffective pursuit of men and her consequential distress reveal a conviction that family

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<sup>4</sup> Figures are available at: [www20.gencat.cat](http://www20.gencat.cat)

<sup>5</sup> Figures are available at: [www.idescat.cat](http://www.idescat.cat)

life can never be complete without a male figurehead. She understands women to be left at the mercy of shifting male desire and power, assuring Sílvia, 'Jo ja no agrado a cap home. Els homes volen anar amb una noia com tu, ja en tinguin vint o setanta'<sup>6</sup> [I no longer attract any man. Men just want to be with a girl like you, whether they are twenty or sixty]. This apparent inevitability leaves her feeling trapped and desperately unhappy; unable to find completeness in her own subjectivity she states that 'la vida és una puta merda' [life is a piece of shit].

The efficacy of the single-mother household is further undermined by the affirmation of 'the separation of the social into public and private spheres' that assumes 'men's privileged place in the first and woman's natural place in the second' (Brooksbank Jones, 1997, 74). Barcelona-based academic Manuel Delgado discusses this ongoing male appropriation of public space, indicating the mother's lack of public inscription: 'Una *mujer de la calle* no es la versión en femenino del *hombre de la calle*, sino más bien su inversión, su negatividad' [A *woman of the street* is not the feminine equivalent of a *man of the street*, but rather the total opposite, its negativity] (2007, 225). Because there is no male head of household the three women struggle to survive financially. In fact, even though Cora rejects her maternal role, she assumes that she ought to stay at home and be provided for. Sílvia defies this sex-gender structure by taking on the role of male breadwinner, but her search for independence is soured by the apparent lack of career opportunities. Brooksbank Jones notes that while:

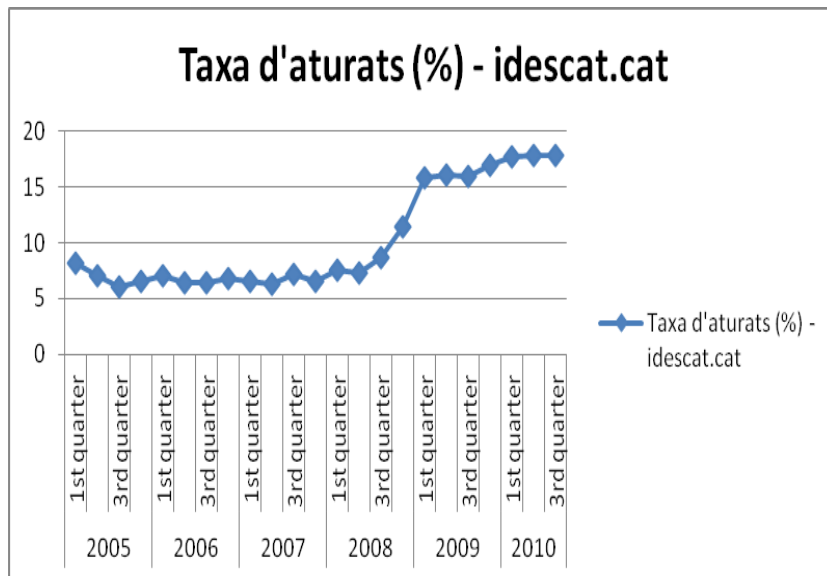
most commentators agree that legal workplace discrimination has been virtually eradicated in Spain [women] remain over-represented at junior levels [and] are extremely vulnerable to discriminatory treatment and enjoy minimal rights. They are also beyond the reach of trade unions which, in any event, have relatively few women members. (1997, 79-80)

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<sup>6</sup> The quotes from *Tres dones i un llop* are taken from viewing the performance: the text does not currently exist in a published form.

Pragmatically rejecting Cora’s and Elo’s dreams of her becoming either a concert pianist or a figure skater, she searches for work, only to find herself employed in a supermarket. Her wage is hardly substantial enough to support the household and seems, furthermore, to humiliate Cora. FAMS has noted that state ideology prevents single-parent families from achieving financial autonomy: ‘queda demostrado que cualquier tipo de familia que no sea el modelo de familia patriarcal está penalizada fiscalmente’ [it remains clear that any type of family which does not follow the patriarchal familial model is financially penalised] (2008, p61). This situation has been further exasperated by the precarious economic situation of recent years, the extremely high unemployment rates in Barcelona and the continuance of black-market employment. The table below demonstrates the rise in unemployment figures from 2005-2010:

Unemployment Figures 2005-2010<sup>7</sup>



<sup>7</sup> These figures are available at [www.idescat.cat](http://www.idescat.cat)

Women's economic situation is not only socially disempowering but also proves to further dismantle familial ties, contributing towards multiple identity crises. The image of the single mother as an effective unit is further devalued as both Elo and Cora recognise Sílvia's precarious situation and yet, failing to see the potential of alternative sex-gender constructs, they both assume that what Sílvia needs is to be rescued by a fairytale prince. When Sílvia is apprehensive about the future, Elo reassures her that 'seràs gran i tindràs un nòvio' [you will be grown up and will have a boyfriend]. Cora in turn fails to warn Sílvia against the potential dangers that she sees in the Wolf (she acknowledges that Víctor is 'subnormal'). Rather, she encourages Sílvia to pursue this relationship in order to reach for a patriarchal ideal: 'Truca aquest Víctor [...] Aprofita que jo me'n vaig un parell d'hores. Truca'l i feu el que us vingui de gust' [Give this Víctor a call ... make the most of me being out for a few hours. Call him and do whatever you like together]. Thus, she constructs Sílvia through the image of male desire and her resulting conclusion is: '[els homes] no hi voldran estar sempre [amb tu]. Ni te n'adonaràs que ja no et miraran' [men won't want to be with you forever. In next to no time they will no longer even look at you]. Ultimately, the gendered spatial restrictions highlight a sense of entrapment that is mirrored by the director's manipulation of space: the flat feels increasingly more claustrophobic. This atmosphere intensifies Cora's sense of isolation and emotional exhaustion and suddenly there seems to be no hope of escaping the patriarchal familial code of learned behaviours and hierarchies. Cora dismisses Sílvia's future autonomy: 'No sé com vaig poder pensar que podries ser l'excepció' [I don't know how I could have thought that you could be an exception].

The fragility of the single mother household is enhanced by the character of the Wolf, Víctor, who appears to be the very essence of the patriarchal male predator. His arrival on the scene seems to confirm the social distribution of gender-related power structures. Thus, Víctor's first encounter with Sílvia on stage combines violent physical force with mental manipulation: a disempowering *insistence* in 'relationship'; grabbing her from behind, he pins her down, covering her mouth to prevent her from screaming, his unnaturally

large shadow towers over and threatens to engulf her. Zipes comments on the early written versions of the tale in which ‘the look or gaze of little red riding hood appears to invite the wolf’s gaze/desire, and therefore she incriminates herself in his act’ (1993, 362). However, in Daulte’s play version *Silvia* cannot be so quickly condemned: Víctor looks at her with phallic domination that dictates *Silvia*’s response. Under the influence of hypnosis *Silvia* is not free to gaze. Through this moment of disempowerment Daulte is able to critique gender violence while simultaneously deconstructing the logic of Perrault’s patriarchal morals.

The performance of the maternal in the play exists in a state of conflict between desire to defy the system and both the physical and psychological entrapments of patriarchal discourse. Whilst Elo’s hatred of Cora and Cora’s neglect of *Silvia* tie in with the male narrative of the degraded mother, the alternative modes of mothering suggest that women can and do find ways to reconfigure patriarchal norms. Although *Sylvia*’s maternal care of Cora and Elo’s maternal care of *Silvia* are problematised by their failings, they do at least point to a greater depth of female solidarity than patriarchal gender assumptions allow for. This flexibility also relates to the complexity of maternal modes within the context of the postmodern city, where, as Bauman notes, ‘all forms should be pliable, all conditions temporary, all shapes amenable to reshaping’ (2005, 94). Thus, the pressures of surviving within the context of ‘the dehumanizing, dystopian reality of the contemporary city’ (Birringer, 1991, 5) intensifies the maternal ambivalence. In fact, Ceasar suggests that postmodernism often ‘represents motherhood as to be both so clichéd and mysterious as to be unrepresentable’ (1995, 123). López enraptures this idea by presenting, in Cora, the image of absolute excess: the character is so deliberately overacted that she seems quite unreal.



Carme Pla, as Cora, agonising over her unfair existence.  
Víctor (played by Roger Coma) spies on her at a distance.<sup>8</sup>

Within the postmodern city context, the frailty of familial ties makes lasting relationships at best unlikely. Cora's assertion that any intimacy *Sílvia* finds will be inevitably only fleeting not only relates to the prioritisation of the male gaze, but also to Bauman's concept of transient liquid love. This provokes an identity crisis that is furthered by the consequences of living in a (post)colonial space: the twenty-first century female body in the (post)colonial space is *doubly colonised* 'by both imperial and patriarchal ideologies' (Ashcroft et al. 2006, 233).

Throughout the play the search for identity is marked by references to photography. Anxious to inscribe meaning, to hold onto reassuring memory traces, Cora reviews her belongings but discovers that a significant number of photos are missing. The audience is not only aware that the Wolf has removed the pictures but also that he has taken further steps to rewrite the family history: each flashback scene is conducted through Víctor's use and abuse of hypnosis. This aspect of the play suggests that the interrelationship between story, memory and myth is particularly problematic within a postmodern, (post)colonial setting. The elusiveness of truth combined with

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<sup>8</sup> [www.lavillarroel.cat/e/shwhist.aspx?IdEx=584](http://www.lavillarroel.cat/e/shwhist.aspx?IdEx=584) (copyright David Ruano, Villarroel).

multiple re-writings of a problematic cultural history points to the importance of mythology within identity formation. Within the context of an imagined Catalan nationhood Francesc Foguet i Boreu suggests that 'el teatre mostra la seva vitalitat si és capaç de crear una mitologia pròpia [...] La formació de mites, com també la seva metamorfosi incessant, esdevé una necessitat inherent de qualsevol cultura' [theatre shows its vitality if it is capable of creating its own mythology [...] The formation of myths, in addition to their continued metamorphosis, is inherently necessary for all cultures] (2005, 33-34). In *Cities of the Dead*, Roach suggests that performance 'stands in for an elusive entity that is not but that it must vainly aspire both to embody and to replace. Hence flourish the abiding yet vexed affinities between performance and memory, out of which blossom the most florid nostalgias for authenticity and origin' (1996, 3-4). Thus, the need to construct the mythology exists alongside the problematic 'pact of forgetting' resulting in an imperfectly deferred political and cultural memory.

Within this context the marginal, *doubly colonised*, incoherent body of the mother is experienced as 'other' and this 'othering' process is further heightened within the Barcelona cultural landscape: the Catalan hinterland is conceived of as maternal and comforting whereas the city is perceived as a zone of freedom from the yoke of Catalan maternity. Whilst this might allow for a proliferation of alternative lifestyles, the mother figure loses her cultural importance, as she has been 'appropriated by more powerful notions of agency' (Ceasar 1995, 121). The patriarchal degrading of the maternal role, experienced on top of colonial anxieties, further enhances the alienation that is experienced between mother and daughter. The absolute failure of the mother-daughter relationship generates deep resentments that result in a spiral of negativity: in the play this leads to the tragic hospital finale.

The problematics of the maternal in the play can be seen to interrelate to Daulte's second point of departure; the monstrous. Caesar notes that with 'the discarded side of the mother now fallen into cultural disuse [...] monstrosity is one form for this disuse to take' (1995, 123). The motif of the monstrous mother or grandmother is found in both Argentine and Catalan theatre: see for example Roberto

Cossa's *La nona* (1977) or Sergi Belbel's *Forasters* (2004). In *Tres dones i un llop* the trope of monstrosity manifests itself in various forms: multiple identities are performed, taking on aspects of monstrosity, bringing into question the possibility of non-violent human interaction. The concept of the monstrous is not new to Daulte; his postmodern approach to subjectivity often results in monstrous figures being produced. His characters' complex desires, combined with their inability to communicate effectively, lead them to carry out monstrous acts. Thus we see a questioning of the efficacy of human behaviour within the context of a search for the fulfilment of desire in the postmodern era. His plays examine the inevitability of monstrous behavioural patterns that prevent communication, destroy relationships and exacerbate isolation. In discussing Daulte's work Heredia references Clarice Lispector's *The Hour of the Star* (1977) in which the narrator poses the question: 'who has not asked himself at some time or other: am I a monster or is this what it means to be a person?' (2009, 23). In *Tres dones i un llop* it is possible to recognise monstrous elements present in the representation of every character. The portrayal of the most 'obvious' monster, the Wolf, as distinctly human creates a certain ambivalence in the constructed divisions between human and animal.



Víctor (Roger Coma) prepares to hunt down his prey (Sílvia).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.lavillarroel.cat/e/temporada.aspx?IdEx=584> (copyright David Ruano, Villarroel)



This offers a clear demonstration of how humanity can behave in monstrous ways but it also facilitates comparisons with the other characters in the play: the enhanced visibility of Víctor's monstrosity can be seen to mirror the less overt and yet still significant monstrous behaviours of Cora and Elo, and even at times Sílvia, demonstrated largely through her ambivalent approach to modes of mothering.

Víctor's selfish obsession with Sílvia is matched by Elo's obsessive hold over her granddaughter: claiming Sílvia as her possession Elo states, 'és meva' [she is mine], vehemently affirming that Víctor therefore cannot have her. In a world where so little seems certain, and so much seems to be out of her control, including her own health, she attempts to manage and manipulate Sílvia's own will, admitting that 'és l'únic que tinc' [she is the only thing that I have]. Although she has taken on a maternal role for Sílvia, her constant criticism of Cora's inadequacies effectively exacerbate the problematics of Sílvia's relationship with Cora: this drives a wedge between herself and her own daughter which she describes as an inability to love, a behavioural pattern which teaches Sílvia to reject her own mother.

Víctor's selfish pursuit of his desire to own Sílvia is matched by Cora's continual disregard for the needs of her family. As she constantly prioritises her own pursuit of sexual fulfilment she mistreats her daughter and ignores her critically-ill mother. However, her actions are dictated by a solitude which is exacerbated by her position as a single mother: throughout the play she repeats that she feels both tired and alone. This reflects what Carter describes as 'the atrocious loneliness' of the monster (2006, 35). In Cora's case this loneliness is exacerbated by the alienation of single motherhood within the city where her only contacts are virtual connections on Facebook. Despite her own apparent rejection of motherhood, she feels an overwhelming jealousy of the relationship that Sílvia appears to share with Elo. Her final gesture of atonement is cloaked with ambiguity: the murder of 'Elo/Víctor' could be seen to atone for her monstrous behaviour, or it could alternatively be read as a belated unsuccessful action, and as a final monstrous rejection of her own mother.

The ambivalence of both Clara and Elo's liminal, maternal positions can be seen to demonstrate the mother's potential for extreme monstrosity within the postmodern urban space. Caesar comments that 'although she abides in the most indeterminate or open-ended of postmodern narratives as something traditional, consoling, and secure, a mother can nevertheless erupt into sudden and profoundly disturbing violence' (Caesar, 1995, 124). This violence is further aggravated by the (post)colonial position which generates a multiplicity of monstrous portrayals. The process of 'othering' of the colonial body engenders a monstrous image that defies normalised forms of categorisation. Thus, the unconcealed body within the postmodern, postcolonial city 'finds its position shifting (in place/out of place) within the discursive sites and the canals of meaning that regulate or affect the drifting of identities' (Birringer, 1991, 28). This ambiguity towards corporal identity generates a fascination with the monstrous body. This is experienced on a daily basis in Barcelona, perhaps most notably through a process of self-othering that buys into the logistics of the global tourist market: the bodies that perform along the Rambla compete for a liminal corporeal distortion, producing distended gargoyles that both invite and mirror the gaze. Thus 'les estàtues humans demanen a la nostra atenció amb la seva quietud multicolor, elevant un monument fútil a si mateixes, a la monstrositat cridanera' [human statues demand our attention with their brightly coloured stillness and raise a futile monument to themselves, to gaudy monstrosity] (CCCB, 105).



A human statue performs in La Rambla.

Monstrous bodies also form a part of imagined, mythical origins in the city, periodically re-emerging in cultural celebration such as the strange *correfoc* devils or the vibrant parades of *gegants i capgrossos*.<sup>10</sup> This self-recognition or mirroring of the monstrous body also takes place during the performance of the play as the form and presence of the actors, their assemblages and sculpture can be seen to express, not only a continuing relation to their previous stage appearances<sup>11</sup>, but also to an imagined shared cultural history. Thus, the visibility of the bodies performing on stage brings about locally inscribed meanings and memories. These can be seen as 'body doubles, overexposed on the surface, everywhere visible and in

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<sup>10</sup> The *correfoc* tradition manifests itself in Catalonia through street parades in which figures dressed up as devilish effigies let off fireworks along the way, whilst members of the public are invited to dance under the falling sparks of fire. *Gegants* are giant papier-mâché figures, clothed and painted to represent mythical heroes or historical archetypes. *Capgrossos* tend to be slightly smaller figurines with oversized heads.

<sup>11</sup> It is significant in this respect that the four actors - Amparo Moreno, Carme Pla, Mireia Aixalà, Roger Coma - are well-known performers within the context of Catalan theatre.

performance, producing their multiple identities' (Birringer, 1991, 21).

These dislocated reconstructions of the body through performance also draw attention to the potential for ambiguous gender constructs in the city. In the play Daulte and López pursue the subject of gender ambivalence through the portrayal of Víctor's desire to take on the female form. Daulte describes the Wolf as 'una persona que asesina y devora a sus víctimas y luego ¡se traviste en ellas!' [A person who assassinates and devours his female victims and afterwards turns himself into them, through a process of transvestism](in Heredia, 2009, 20). On the one hand, this behaviour can be read as a critique of patriarchal assumptions whereby the male obsession for complete domination over the female form may potentially lead to the total destruction of the female body. On the other hand, the image of transvestism, and of becoming 'other', can be seen to blur these patriarchal gender boundaries, bringing into the open questions of more complex desires. This is relevant within the Barcelona cityscape where the plethora of alternative gender and sexual choices strives to exist in continual conflict with the conservatism of patriarchal norms. Altisent writes that 'the cross-dresser and the transsexual are important figures of the Barcelona night-time scene' coming to represent 'the spirit of permanent mutation, voyeurism and exhibitionism' (2008, 150). Holiday brochures tend to glamorise this aspect of the city, eroticising zones such as the Gayeixample and the Raval, encouraging in turn an exoticisation of the city that is in itself problematic. On the other hand, as Roach suggests, institutional attempts to normalise alternative modes of being within the behavioural vortex of the cityscape, seen for example in Barcelona in the recent opening of l'Espai DIXIT LGBT, may seek to reduce potential for transgression (1996, 28).

Despite these complications the figure of the monster may be useful for combating identity binaries. Hutchinson suggests that 'the monster might prove to be a more complete idea of subjectivity than the rational, moral, western subject' (in Baker, 2000, 101). The monstrous speaks to a relationship between self and other: in the play, within the competing maternal positions and within competing desires it is possible to detect a blurring between self and other as the

characters see their behavioural patterns reflected in one another. Where conflicting identities leave no room for certainty, monstrosity can be a means of moving beyond the entrapments of gender inscription, of naming the other, or as Cixous puts it of 'thinking the unthinkable' (in Blyth and Sellers, 2004, 94). In discussing the opposition between self and other, Shildrik suggests that:

So long as the monstrous remains the absolute other in its corporeal difference it poses few problems

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becomes deeply disturbing. In other words, what is at stake is not simply the status of those bodies which might be termed monstrous, but the being in the body at all. To valorise the monster, then, is to challenge the parameters of the subject as defined within logocentric discourse. (2002, 2-3)

In Barcelona, distinctions between self and other continue to be blurred by competing political and cultural discourses. The ambivalence of the body in this postcolonial and postmodern space is made further ambiguous by the effects of demographical changes, in which global waves of immigration, alongside tourism, create additional competing identities. The city is populated by the monstrous *arrivant*, inhabiting a borderland that annihilates or renders indeterminate, all the distinctive signs of a prior identity, 'the absolute *arrivant* thus has no name and no identity' (Malabou and Derrida, 2004, 235). While this identity crisis can seem unsettling, the impossibility of knowing the *arrivant* disrupts our expectations and helps to instigate a rethinking of our conception of normality. The incomprehensibility of the monstrous offers singular encounters within a future that cannot be anticipated, it offers a potentially transgressive way of thinking otherwise. This approach aims to take the focus on the body beyond the limitations of cultural inscriptions. Seeing the Catalan body in monstrous terms could therefore offer a pathway beyond the problematics of the seeming failure of normalisation because monstrosity resists reductive representations:

‘monsters exceed taxonomic classifications, and so query a series of coagulated discursive practices regarding what is normal’ (Dixon, 2011).

López's exploration of the limits of both the maternal and the monstrous is markedly different to Daulte's: whereas the Argentine version ends on a note of pessimism, as ‘Víctor/Elo’ falls dead, the Catalan production incorporates an additional epilogue that offers a fairytale ending. López employs storytelling techniques, with Víctor rising from the dead, taking a microphone and speaking directly to the audience. This draws attention to the irreality of the happily-ever-after but simultaneously embraces the possibility of bodies ‘overflowing their borders’ (Shephard, 2006, 114). The redemptive potential that López sees for all three of her female characters can be read as an attempt to re-inscribe a positive portrayal of both the feminine and the maternal onto the Catalan landscape that recognises the resilient potential of the monstrous body. This engagement with the monstrous feminine ‘emphasises the complexity of same/different relations between self and abject and the particular role of the grotesque figure in this; and a (critical) acknowledgment of the Deleuzian notion that bodies are continually becoming and porous rather than finished and complete [...] it is the encounter with the monstrous other, an as yet unthought figure that heralds unpredictability and change’ (Dixon, 2011).

Within the context of the Barcelona theatre world this approach to the feminine body suggests that López is aware that her position, as a woman with considerable influence within this sphere, gives her a responsibility to use this position wisely. Since she took over the role of artistic director at the Villarroel, López has shown a marked interest in promoting the role of Catalan women in theatre. This is particularly evident in her organisation of the play *L'any que ve serà millor* [Next Year Will Be Better] (Villarroel Production, 2011). A collaboration between four contemporary female playwrights who are based in Barcelona,<sup>12</sup> the piece incorporates an all-female cast as a means of examining the identity of women in the city. López also recognises the

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<sup>12</sup> Marta Buchaca, Carol López, Mercè Sarrias and Victoria Szpunberg

part that Daulte has played in making her own work more visible. She uses the epilogue of the play as a means of offering a public eulogy to Daulte's contribution to Catalan theatre, picturing *Sílvia* holding hands with Daulte in Buenos Aires. Drawing this connection between Barcelona and Buenos Aires is suggestive of the ongoing potential for constructive theatrical transatlantic relations.

The incorporation of Javier Daulte, over the last decade, into the Catalan theatre system has been one of the most important factors that have contributed towards a growing relationship of theatrical exchange between Barcelona and Buenos Aires. The postmodernist aesthetics of Daulte's work have played a key role in enabling his work to be re-read and interpreted by a local Catalan audience. However, his popularity has also increased by his apparent willingness to support and work with local practitioners. Daulte works to convert the theatre space into 'una zona de esencial incertidumbre' (Heredia, 2007, 23) [a zone of essential uncertainty], and this uncertainty allows for non-essentialising connections with the Catalan cultural space to be made. His reproduction of identity-related sociolinguistic and gender conflicts can be seen in particular to have contributed towards his reception within Barcelona. His working methodology has allowed him: 'conjuminar en un mateix projecte famílies teatrals o, fins i tot, dinàmiques tan diferents com les del teatre oficial, l'alternatiu i els espais més *off* de la ciutat' [to bring together in a clear project theatre families or dynamics as different as an official theatre, alternative theatre and the really fringe spaces of the city] (Casares, 2005, 95). Daulte's success has therefore pulled against the discourse that characterises the Catalan cultural space as exclusive. It has revealed multiple spaces of encounter within the theatre space in the city, and his collaboration with local practitioners has allowed local meanings to sediment in his work.

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