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Authors	Buffery, Helena
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In Process: The Catalan Independence Movement in On-stage Translation

Helena Buffery
University College Cork

The Catalan pro-independence process – also known as *El procés* or *El Procés* – has generated extensive discursive activity in response to the events of September and October 2017, when the Generalitat de Catalunya's commitment to hold a binding referendum on Catalonia's secession from Spain led to Spanish legal and political intervention in the region, including the violent police response of 1 October 2017, the suspension of regional self-government and the imprisonment of political and civic leaders on charges of rebellion. As has become increasingly clear in the aftermath of those events, the radically opposing frames employed to mediate and re-present them can be read, following Michael Richards (2013), in terms of opposing cultural trauma narratives, that have at their root alternative ways of remembering the Spanish Civil War, the Francoist dictatorship and the Transition to democracy.[1]

Richards understands cultural trauma as:

> a tapestry of historical constructs depicting specific painful events which is shaped by the *post facto* interplay of political power, social relationships and agency, and shared structures of meaning. Whilst related materially and metaphorically to personal trauma (persistent damage caused to individuals who have lived through violent experiences which cannot be forgotten), *cultural* trauma is viewed here as something distinct. This remains the case even though it is essential to recount many individually traumatic experiences in order to make sense of and evaluate claims of collective trauma. (2013, 1–2)

The distinction he makes here between the experience of painful events and their narrative emplotment as socio-politically inflected historical constructs is an important one both to understand competing visions and accounts of twentieth-century Spanish history and to re-frame more recent mediation of the different types and events of violence and trauma evoked in relation to *El Procés*. The historian's careful diachronic plotting of the factors that influence shifts in cultural trauma narratives helps both to contextualize "the recent surge of war-associated memories", relating them not only to "a critique of 'forgetting' after 1975, but also to a general fragmentation of contemporary forms of collective identity" (9), and to remind us of the actual diversity of competing narratives and forms of political agency, the fact that "social actors were active participants in the dynamic and variegated process of constructing a democratic constitutional state" (279).

As in Mona Baker's influential *Translation and Conflict: A Narrative Account*, Richards provides an approach to social narrative frames, to the "public and personal 'stories' that we subscribe to and that guide our behaviour" (Baker 2006, 19), that is not only concerned with the ways in which they shape and contain everyday perceptions of reality but acknowledges the multiple, and often competing, agencies involved in their construction, transmission and (re)framing. The different aesthetic

1 For a succinct overview of the particular cultural trauma narratives underpinning the Catalan pro-independence process, see the entry on the independence movement in Buffery-Marcer (2011).

responses to *El Procés* that will be discussed in this article will on one level be considered as particular narrative framings of painful events, with narrative used in the broad sense common to social narrative theory, as in Baker (2006). However, at another level they will be seen as challenges and/or responses to the dominant frames, through the ways in which they expose or exceed the expectations of spectators, undermine or critique particular versions of social reality, and/or engage in processes of overt re-framing, understood as "structures of anticipation [...] consciously initiated in order to present a narrative in a certain light" (Baker 2006, 167).

At the most basic level, what distinguishes the "Catalan frame" is the commitment to remembering not only the personal, social and political but also, crucially, the cultural repression, trauma and loss associated with the victory of the Francoist forces (the so-called "*Nacionales*") in 1939; in part because these spheres are inseparable in the Catalan case – social and political repression in the region was driven by perception of cultural and linguistic illegitimacy; in part because the memory of this particular characteristic of political violence could hence be associated with previous cultural trauma narratives, most obviously the suppression of the Catalan language and cultural institutions after the eighteenth-century War of Succession (see, for instance, Ferrer i Gironès 1985). Unlike other, particularly pro-independence, commentators, such as those represented in volumes like *What Catalans Want* (Strubell 2011), *What's up with Catalonia?* (Castro ed. 2013), *Catalonia Calling* (Creus ed. 2013) or *La captivitat inadvertida* (Sales 2014), I am not claiming that this particular cultural trauma narrative legitimizes the recent movement for secession, nor even that it is the primary cause of *El Procés*. As both Kathryn Crameri (2014) and Andrew Dowling (2018), among others, have shown, there are numerous factors which have contributed to the unprecedented rise in pro-independence sentiment in the region since the beginning of the twenty-first century (see also Forti *et al.* 2017). However, it is clear that it is a social narrative frame that has been unintelligible for other groups, communities and political positionings, which either refuse to recognize the legitimacy of cultural or national difference within the Spanish state, and thus see the cause of pro-independence sentiment to be the determinant presence of Catalan language and culture in education and the media in the region, or oppose the prioritization of cultural over social emancipation as a symptom of retrograde ethnic or nostalgic bourgeois nationalism, read in line with a resurgence of right-wing nationalist movements in Europe.

Here, I am interested in exploring the ways in which the mediation of these opposing – and at times mutually exclusive – frames both affects what can be seen, and therefore recognized and talked about in the context of continuing calls for dialogue in order to resolve the "Catalan crisis", and exposes the discourses sustaining them. In this, I am drawing on Judith Butler's ethical call in *Frames of War* (2010), not only "to consider and attend to the suffering of others" and distinguish "which frames permit for the representability of the human and which do not", but also:

> how the *frames* that allocate the recognizability of a certain figure of the human are themselves linked with broader *norms* and determine what will and will not be a grievable life. My point... is that whether and how we respond to the suffering of others, how we formulate moral criticisms, how we articulate political analyses, depends upon a certain field of perceptive reality having already been established. This field of perceptive reality is one in which the notion of the recognizable human is formed and maintained. (Butler 2010, 63–64, original emphasis throughout)

As Butler (2010, 70–71) goes on to recognize, considering the *frame* is not just a question of establishing *how* communities read the documentary evidence before them, for "[e]ven the most transparent of documentary images is framed, and framed for a purpose, carrying that purpose within its frame and implementing it through its frame". It is about attending to how the image structures how we register reality, how it "works to organize our perception and thinking as well". Whilst the first half of this article, up to and including the discussion of the 2018 Teatre Lliure productions *En Procés* I and II, is precisely about exposing the operation of this framing in the case of mediations of the Catalan pro-independence movement, it will also explore how some theatrical representations, in particular, themselves respond critically to the dominant frames. In other words, I will consider how theatre, in particular, as a form that not only re-frames an image but also brings together citizens in an interactive space, can contribute to re-negotiate the macro-processes which the frame operates to contain: the competing interests within neo-liberal capitalism of public versus private, individual versus mutual, diversity versus integration or assimilation, and the possibility of constituting alternatives. In this, I am indebted to debates in contemporary theatre and performance theory about the politics of theatre and citizenship (Wiles 2013; Vicente Hernando 2013) and the constitutive power of assembly (Butler 2015; Butler-Athanasiou 2013; Pérez Royo-Agulló 2016).

Re-staging the Events of October 2017: From *Polònia* to the Teatre Lliure

For the month of October 2017, Catalonia was almost constantly in the international media, and the conflicts between different positionings on the significance, legitimacy and impact of the events spilled out into social media especially, often reduced to an exchange of accusations and insults rather than the responsible dialogue that many individuals and groups were calling for.[2] Representation of the vicissitudes of the movement were re-played in real time on a series of different screens, so that it became difficult for commentators (and actors) to distinguish between what they saw mediated on screen, across various virtual platforms, and the reality of face-to-face social encounters. Accusations of fake news emerged on all sides, even though international commentators in the non-Spanish-speaking world, in particular, were able to draw attention to the spectre of censorship on Spanish television (Marr 2017), where almost no images of violence against the Catalan population were broadcast at all.[3] At the same time the often graphic and brutal images that were spread across local and international media, and the careful mapping and later recontextualization of these (Catmemoria 2017), drew attention to the sensationalizing tendency of the contemporary media, the way in which appeals to the visceral and to the emotional and

2 As well as "Bandera blanca" (White Flag) demonstrations in the week following 1 October 2017, and petitions and letters published in the international press, a number of transnational institutions drafted statements calling for international dialogue. Amongst the most prominent were: The Elders (https://theelders.org/news/elders-call-dialogue-and-restraint-over-catalonia-crisis); UN experts (https://www.ohchr.org/en/newsevents/pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22197&LangID=E); and the EU-Catalonia Dialogue Platform (https://www.eucatplatform.eu/eu-catalonia-dialogue-platform/) (all checked 22-02-2019).

3 Comparison of headlines at the following sites, shows that the main focus in the Spanish press was on the challenge presented by the referendum to the Spanish state and, perhaps unsurprisingly, on the effectiveness displayed by the Spanish police rather than on the police violence and its nature: https://lavanguardia.com/politica/20171001/431691782273/portadas-prensa-espanola-1-o.html; http://www.europapress.es/nacional/noticia-portadas-periodicos-hoy-lunes-octubre-2017-20171002012651.html (both checked 22-12-2018).

affective are at the centre of competition for airtime. But before we could be returned once more to the realm of simulacra, as famously posited by Jean Baudrillard in 1981 (1994), in that now all-too-ubiquitous diagnosis of our contemporary hyperreality,[4] the dispersal of screens, mobile phones and social media both multiplied the viewpoints from which the events were seen, providing personal testimonies, and ensured interpersonal and community connection, so that participants were simultaneously locked into a cycle of being, being watched and watching. The blurring of boundaries between reality and fiction, actual events and fake news, was consistently denounced in theatrical terms, harking back to the theories put forward by Guy Debord in *The Society of the Spectacle* (in 1967). Indeed, one of the most recent performances relating to the pro-independence process, Soren Evinson's radical dance performance *A Nation is Born in Me* at the Antic Teatre in November–December 2018,[5] very overtly reprises the theories of Baudrillard and Debord to perform the ways in which the individual has been enslaved by hegemonic images.

Returning to debate over the role of simulacra and the spectacle in the events of October 2017: the Spanish foreign minister, Alfonso Dastis, stubbornly stuck to the line that the images of police violence that were replaying on the BBC news were fake (Marr 2017); one of the most notorious clips of a woman claiming police had broken her fingers one by one was later exposed as fake when she herself later admitted the diagnosis was capsulitis, but led to follow-up videos showing the staging of the event that gave credence to readings outside Catalonia that questioned the reality of the police violence;[6] the youtube video, *Help Catalonia*, generated by Òmnium Cultural in mid-October, led to exposés of its faked nature, such as the following in *El Mundo*, entirely dependent on the revelation that an "actress" had been involved:

> "Como actriz, el punto de referencia como técnica, lo que considero más influyente, es ver a un gran actor haciendo un Shakespeare y ver llorar a toda la platea". Así hablaba en una entrevista hace unos años Anna, cuando todavía su rostro no había inundado las pantallas de móvil, de ordenador y de televisión de medio mundo, ni su interpretación dramática había puesto voz temblorosa (en inglés) y rostro compungido a la Cataluña que se dice oprimida por España. *Crónica* la encuentra en la semana en que se ha convertido en el símbolo de la propaganda independentista. Su madre nos lo confirma: sí, es su hija.
>
> La joven actriz Anna Maruny Castillón, nacida hace 26 años en Girona y enamorada del don de Shakespeare para emocionar al público, es la **chica llorosa del vídeo plagado de mentiras que Òmnium Cultural difundió este lunes bajo el título de** *Help Catalonia. Save Europe* (Ayuda a Cataluña. Salva a Europa). (Dalio 2017, original emphasis)

Amongst the numerous memes that followed the release of this video (itself outed as a copy of a Ukrainian video from the time of the Euromaidan), the most

4 See also Baudrillard's sobering denouncement of the hyperreal ineffectualness of European responses to the war in Bosnia, and above all his diagnosis about the hypocrisy of the West: "Where any particularity, any minority, any specific idiom, any passion or irreducible belief, and, above all, any antagonistic worldview survives or persists, an indifferent order must be imposed – as indifferent as we are to our own values. We generously distribute the right to be different, while secretly and inexorably working to produce a pale and undifferentiated world" (Baudrillard 1996, 86).

5 "A la llum del ressorgiment i enfortiment progressiu dels moviments nacionalistes i identitaris a tot Europa al segle XXI, A NATION IS BORN IN ME extreu dinàmiques que operen en aquests moviments i els combina amb polítiques d'identitat, cultura mediàtica i cultura esportiva, provocant una estranya proximitat entre aquestes estètiques aparentment contraries." For more information, see http://www.anticteatre.com/events/event/soren-evinson-a-nation-is-born-in-me/ (checked 22-12-2018).

6 A full account of the issue is available at:
https://www.reddit.com/r/catalunya/comments/77d2g6/violence_in_catalonia_needed_closer_scrutiny_in (checked 21-12-2018).

amusing was the response of the TV3 programme *Polònia*, "Forget Catalonia",[7] that used performance via satirical surrogation (Roach 1996; 1998), of the figure of Deputy Prime Minister Soraya Sáenz Santamaría, both to expose the staginess of the original and to provide a counter-dispositif to remediate the messages being disseminated by the Spanish government at the time. It focused on the "Spanishness" of the Spanish; the ungratefulness of Catalans (described as "Catalafakes"); their attacks on the police and insistence on "breaking eggs" to make omelettes; the need for Spanish police, laws, media, including the political cartoonist "El Roto", to protect Spain. The spoof video calls for non-interference, culminating in the plea that the international community "look very much away, when you hear the strike of a baton... it's easy, just do what you do with the refugees. Forget Catalonia, save Europe".

Television became a key mediator of the unfolding events, to the extent that it was constantly held to account by critics for its misrepresentation or skewing of reality.[8] One of the most impactful mediators of the whole process, more than the various newspaper images and albums, documentaries, debate shows, news features and analyses, was, as glimpsed above, the Catalan satirical show *Polònia*, which arguably offers the most continuous record of the breakneck speed with which the Catalan landscape was changing in this period. Of course, its satirical portrayal of the different politicians and public figures involved, and the tendency to associate all Catalan media with political propaganda by the parties most opposed to the independence movement and, above all, to the disputed referendum of 1 October, meant that it came in for particular criticism and calls for censorship from unionists especially. Furthermore, while many commented on its even-handedness in satirical representation of the politicians, there were moments that indicated clear and unambiguous political positioning with the pro-independence movement, such as the first show (on 5 October 2017) after the disputed referendum, when the planned programme was cancelled in respect for the suffering of the people who had turned out to vote earlier that week, and then the final show before the summer of 2018, where the many public figures who no longer appear as constantly in the public eye – all of them by now in prison or in exile – gathered together, via their surrogates, in a – no less poignant because *faux* – behind the scenes moment.

If I have mentioned *Polònia* here, it is in part to draw attention to the difference between its almost constant representation of the evolving events, through means we would associate with the theatrical (involving re-staging, reinterpretation, performance and surrogation), and the comparative absence of theatrical restagings in the Catalan theatre. In fact, the only time when the events of October 2017 were represented openly on stage was in February 2018, on two evenings of workshopped shows, entitled *En Procés* 1 and 2, at the Teatre Lliure de Gràcia, on Monday 12 and 19 February, respectively.[9] Given the subsequent claims Lluís Pasqual made about his September 2018 departure from the directorship of the Teatre Lliure having to do with his political

7 The excerpt from *Polònia* can be consulted at: https://www.ccma.cat/video/embed/5695851/ (checked 21-12-2018).

8 On the one hand, there were almost constant attacks by Ciutadans on TV3, variously portrayed as "Teleprocés" or "TVPuigdemont", and culminating in Albert Rivera's accusation on the television programme *Els matins* that the channel is an "aparell de propaganda separatista" (Rodrigo-Surroca 2018). On the other hand, many Spanish journalists themselves denounced the censorship and lack of balance in the RTVE coverage of the October 2017 events in Catalonia. As evident, for instance, at https://www.lavanguardia.com/television/20171002/431739446450/tve-referendum-1o-catalunya-periodistas-criticas.html, and the full report of the Consejo de Informativos (Broadcast News Council): https://cdn27.hiberus.com/uploads/documentos/2017/10/24/_informecatalunya1o_7133f118.pdf (both checked 21-02-2019). Complaints about both corporations were made to the European Parliament in April 2018 (Sánchez 2018).

9 I am grateful to the Press Secretary at the Teatre Lliure for granting me access to online audiovisual recordings of these performances.

discomfort with the pro-independence movement, it is important to note that in the press release for *En Procés*, he himself took the credit for commissioning the experiment, in response to the kind of documentary, verbatim and emergency theatre he himself claimed to have witnessed at the Edinburgh Fringe.[10] Furthermore, even though both *El País* at the time and *El Mundo* some months later draw attention to the partisan nature of the experiment (Blanco 2018; Anton 2018a; 2018b), the inclusion of work by eleven different dramatists and its late insertion within an over-arching programme for the 2017–2018 season that was notable for its diversity and inclusivity (with themes ranging from "Refugiats / Estrangers / Estranys" to "En risc d'exclusió", "Obstinació extrema" and "En convivència", as well as the revival of plays from previous seasons that overtly staged memories of conflict, such as Sergi Belbel's adaptation of Schiller's *Mary Stuart* and Pasqual's own *In memoriam – La quinta del biberó*)[11] suggest that the experiment in fact responded to a vision of theatre's responsibility to reflect the sociopolitical context in which it is embedded and was at least intended to encourage a plurality of responses. Involving both long-standing and more marginal and/or experimental dramatists, the project called on participants to devise a short ten-minute play that responded to *El Procés* and included no more than two or three characters. Most of the plays were then directed as staged readings by the dramatists themselves, with the exception of two which came under the responsibility of the overall director of proceedings, Joan Yago. Two mirrors were placed at the back of the stage throughout the proceedings, encouraging audiences to consider their own positions within the drama.

On 12 February, audiences were treated to *Pàtria* by Esteve Soler, in which actors Andrés Herrera and Jordi Rico argued over who is the most patriotic, comparing ideological credentials that range from their use of language, culinary preferences, directionality of their flags and even their gait, to establish who loves their homeland most; *Vis-a-vis*, by Victoria Szpunberg, in which Txell Bonet played an aspiring actress trying out for the role of her public/private self, as journalist and wife of the cultural activist Jordi Cuixart, in prison on charges of sedition and incitement to violence; *La peixera* by Marc Artigau, which had actor Jordi Rico play a male primary school teacher in the aftermath of the October events in order to portray their effect on notions of morality and community; *Traïció* by Marta Galán, in which Núria Lloansi was required to give an alienating, body-focused performance to draw attention to the limits of national emancipatory movements with regard to women's bodies; and, finally, Guillem Clua's *Constitució*, in which Ramon Pujol and Jaume Ulled stubbornly recited competing versions of the Spanish constitution and the Catalan statute of autonomy, drawing attention to both the similarity and the mutual exclusivity of their respective narrative frames.

On 19 February, the experiment began with Lali Álvarez's *Ella*, in which actress Imma Colomer drew on different aspects of the discourse of resistance of 1

10 In the run-up to the first show, he is quoted in *Ara* as follows: "Estem vivint una situació política que a vegades porta a esdeveniments extrems. Això genera sensacions molt diferents, entre les quals per mi la més gran és la impotència –diu Pasqual–. Què més puc dir? Què més puc fer? La impotència, però, pot generar la necessitat de dir alguna cosa. Es pot dir en una plaça, però també en un teatre" (Pasqual, in Cervantes 2018).

11 See the Teatre Lliure 2017/2018 *Dossier de Premsa* at www.teatrelliure.cat (checked 21-12-2018). The version of *Mary Stuart* gave rise to fascinating reflection and debate amongst actors, director and public about the echoes between Schiller's vision of the moral and political conflict surrounding the Scottish queen's imprisonment and final sentencing and the blurring of the boundaries between executive and legislative spheres in relation to contemporary prosecution of pro-independence leaders. See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mUmxilRAJd4 (checked 28-02-2019). The most affecting moment came with actress Sílvia Bel's account of the emotional and ethical impact and struggle produced by each repetition of her long scene with Burleigh (played by Carles Martínez) in Act I.

October 2017 in order to defend her character's own claim for recognition and emancipation: in her case, the right to heating, shelter and freedom from eviction. This particular performance exceeded the limits of the theatrical dispositif, with Colomer reprising her role on the street outside the Teatre Lliure at the end of the show, and reminding audiences of the pre-histories of urban protest in Barcelona (see, for instance, Andreu 2015; Nel·lo 2015; Padullés-Uribe 2017). The other plays, in order of performance, were *Només una veu*, by Llàtzer Garcia, in which Ivan Benet played a citizen who is uncertain of how to respond to his neighbour's wish to hang a flag with the word "Democràcia" on it from his balcony, questioning what it really means and resisting the pressure to become part of a single voice; *Supremacistes* by Cristina Clemente, in which two teachers, played by Júlia Barceló and Laura Conejero, compared the increasing hyperbole of their attitudes to "others" who did not share their respective social narrative frames, drawing attention to their responsibility as teachers to focus on empathy and dialogue; *Capità Mandrake* by Clàudia Cedó, which required actors Alejandro Bordanove and Miquel Gelabert to mediate a fictionalized version of the conflict between Spain and Catalonia, as devised by young adults with autism; *You Say You Want a Revolution* by Helena Tornero, in which actors Ahmad Alhamsho, Alicia G. Reyero and Manar Taljo interrogated the relationship of the pro-independence process in Catalonia to other international emancipatory movements and the possibility of coalitional politics; and finally, Sergi Belbel's *La solitud de l'u* took the audience back to the very moment of the eruption of violence, as seen through the eyes of a Civil Guard in riot gear, played by Alejandro Bordanove, and the woman he is about to hit, here Laura Conejero.

In interview for TV3, Victoria Szpunberg and Marc Artigau both indicated an initial reluctance to be involved in the project, in part because of the media saturation around the events, but also because of their sense of difficulty in finding sufficient distance to be able to present a coherent response.[12] In this way, they transmitted very clearly the way in which contemporary media representations contain reality – and subjectivity – within particular frames, as well as the importance of somehow finding the distance to question these frames, to use the particular character of theatre, its dependence on simultaneous presence and representation, to encourage audiences to see reality from different perspectives. In Artigau's case, this is achieved through humour, through mediation of the conflict and violence through the metaphor of a fish-tank that once contained the school pet, a goldfish called Joan Carles. In Szpunberg it is achieved through a form of documentary theatre, that draws on the actual experiences of Txell Bonet, but provides distance by having her try out for the role of herself. Whereas some of the short plays are more didactic, either simply replaying the different social narrative frames in competition or exploring the ways in which individuals fail to see the humanity of the other because their investment in a particular cultural trauma narrative limits their capacity to see from other perspectives, others actively encourage the audience to see through the eyes of the other.

The most impactful of the latter is, no doubt, Lali Álvarez's *Ella*, where the audience is reminded to show solidarity with everyday instances of marginalization and precarity, and to contextualize the independence movement's calls for solidarity. Similarly, Helena Tornero's *You say you want a Revolution*, although it generally relies on caricature, through the figures of a *Cupaire* (played by Manara Taljo) and a newly revolutionary *Indepe* from the more affluent *zona alta* (played by Alicia G. Reyero), interspersed with the pacifist genealogy of John Lennon's song for The Beatles, forces the audience to confront other visions of revolution and traumatic loss. These are represented by Ahmad Allamsho's personal narrative in Arabic both of the hope of the

12 See *Parlem d'En procés*: https://www.ccma.cat/video/embed/5729724/ (checked 21-12-2018).

Arab Spring and the horrors of the subsequent conflict, mediated by surtitles in Catalan. In this case, perhaps the most powerful moment comes at the end, when the actress playing the *Indepe*, Alicia G. Reyero, tells the audience what each of the actors will do after the performance. She herself, from Burgos, will return to her flat in the Barceloneta; Manar, who is half Syrian, will go back to her home in the Guinardó, whereas Ahmad, who is an asylum seeker, will be sent back to the refugee shelter in which he is currently living. Moments like this made the mirrors on stage function also as calls to reflect on "[w]hat allows us to encounter the other? What are the conditions of possibility...?" (Butler 2004, 49):

> For if I am confounded by you, then you are already of me, and I am nowhere without you. I cannot muster the "we" except by finding the way in which I am tied to "you", by trying to translate but finding that my own language must break up and yield if I am to know you. You are what I gain through this disorientation and loss. (Butler 2004, 49)

Surprisingly, given the range of different responses represented by dramatists and actors, at least one critic complains overtly that "la toma de partido vuelve a predominar en la segunda sesión del ciclo de teatro sobre el desafío independentista" (Anton 2018a). The examples he gives of its partisan nature include reference to "las ratas que llegan a Barcelona en un barco" in Marc Artigau's piece, and the fact that "Victoria Szpunberg hizo actuar a Txell Bonet, la mujer de Jordi Cuixart", leading to his conclusion that "no parecen estar los tiempos para andarse con remilgos o miramientos, y prácticamente todos los autores han creado textos desde una mirada favorable a la causa independentista, cuando no militante". Writing for *El País*, whilst he does not go so far as to suggest the presence of direct censorship of other points of view, as will be the case later the same year in *El Mundo* (Blanco 2018), he does indicate that the particular sociopolitical context – "estos momentos de 155, presos, confusión y tribulaciones" – might have led to some form of self-censorship, and calls for other perspectives to be represented.

Jacinto Anton's view contrasts with other critics and commentators, such as the following blogger who writes that the plays "presenten diferents moments del procés d'independència des de tots els punts de vista; des de les persones obsessionades amb el procés, fins a la Guàrdia Civil, passant per aquells que no tenen clar a quin bàndol pertanyen, ni si volen fer-ho en cap" (http://somnisdeteatre.com/en-proces-2/). In the latter case, the blogger even ventures to wish that the texts might be published, because "res no m'agradaria més que poder tenir a casa aquests textos per recuperar-los d'aquí uns anys. Qui s'anima a editar-los?" These two extremes of reception help to illustrate the operation of mutually exclusive social narrative frames, as posited earlier, how these frames re-construct reality and impact on the ability to recognize, let alone grieve for, the traumatic losses of others. The case of *En Procés* draws attention to the perceived lack of theatrical responses to the Catalan crisis, and to their limitations: their ephemerality, limited accessibility, subjection to sociopolitical context, tendency to caricature and over-simplification, and the idea that they are preaching to the converted. However, there is also a clear sense in which, rather than creating the kinds of monuments presented elsewhere, such as the range of ensemble and musical responses to the tricentenary of 1714,[13] theatre was being convoked via this experiment to

13 Titles thrown up by an online google search for theatrical productions during the tricentenary year include: *1714: Tres-cents anys de setge*; *Fang i setge*; C*rònica d'un setge 1714*; *La roda i el foc 1714–2014*. Many of these productions were the work of amateur or provincial companies, indicating also the importance of amateur theatre in Catalan civic society, and some included more distancing or comic

provide a space for reflection: one that is open, emergent and constitutive rather than fetishizing or monumentalizing.[14]

Critical Re-framings of *El Procés* at the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya

In contrast to the posited uniqueness of the *En Procés* experiment, there is in fact evidence of sporadic but sustained theatrical engagement with the independence process throughout the latter's development. Apart from certain productions relating to the 2014 tricentenary, there has been little use of nostalgic views of the past, and as Francesc Foguet (2013) observes, in general when Catalan playwrights have turned to historical events it has been to question or critique the historical process. As far as contextualizing the pro-independence movement is concerned, after a period of "invisibility" during the 1980s and 1990s, when Catalan drama tended to favour more abstract or international settings (see Feldman 2009), there are texts from the beginning of the twenty-first century that begin to focus more on contemporary Catalan spaces and the relationship between theatre and public space, from the critical works of Albert Boadella and Els Joglars (with the revival of the *Trilogia nacional*), to the signs of concern about the conditions for the transmission of Catalan culture in Josep Benet i Jornet's *Salamandra* (2008) and Carles Batlle's *Oblidar Barcelona* of 2009.

However, the main plays that have explored a process of radicalization in Catalonia include the work of Jordi Casanovas, Albert Mestres, Guillem Clua, Marc Rosich and Narcís Comadira, at times through the exploration of a longer genealogy of conflict and protest, as in the case of Casanovas's *Una història catalana* (2011), *Pàtria* (2012) and *Vilafranca (un dinar de festa major)* (2015), or Mestres's *1714. Homenatge a Sarajevo* (2004) and *Una història de Catalunya* (2012), which place the Catalan struggle in international context. To complement consideration in the previous section on work produced in the Teatre Lliure, I wish to focus on two plays by Narcís Comadira and Marc Rosich, which were both premiered in Barcelona's other major public theatre, the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, under the artistic direction of Xavier Albertí, in the 2014–2015 and 2016–2017 seasons, respectively. Both plays offer quite critical perspectives on the pro-independence process, and in particular on the role of the Catalan bourgeoisie in the movement, actively scrutinizing the dominant social narrative frames. Premiered on 13 May 2015,[15] Narcís Comadira's *L'hort de les oliveres*, similarly to Casanova's *Una història catalana*, focuses on a Catalan family with diverse interests, whose relationship to tradition is skewed by economic concerns, and the overriding sense of their selfishness and willingness to betray their heritage and tradition in order to live fulfilled lives as individuals. Marc Rosich's *A tots els que*

readings of history, such as *La butaca*, which included a time-travelling Mosso superintendent who goes back to 1714 to advise Rafael Casanova.

14 In contrast, the more recent staging of Santiago Rusiñol's *Els jocs florals de Canprosa* at the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, in October/November 2018, draws on a more complacent and monumentalizing aesthetic, notwithstanding its superficial inclusivity and re-writing of tradition, that is at odds with most of the other shows analysed here.

15 *L'hort de les oliveres*, by Narcís Comadira. Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, Sala Gran, 13 May–26 June 2015. Directed by Xavier Albertí. Scenography: Jordi Roig; Lighting: David Bofarull; Characterization: Toni Santos; Costumes: María Araujo; Sound: Carles Gómez and Josep Puigdolers; Movement: Roberto G. Alonso. Cast: Felicitat Pons Coutourier – Mercè Aranega; Angeleta Rabert, la minyona – Mont Plans; Esperança Bofill, la filla – Marta Ossó; Guillem Bofill, el fill – Rubén de Eguía; Fidel Caballé, amic – Ricard Farré; Frederic Riu, notari – Carles Canut; Amèlia Riu, filla del notari – Aina Sànchez; Mossèn Agustí Relats, el rector – Antoni Comes; Narcís Cordelira, el poeta – Oriol Genís; Bruno Campos, el novio de la filla – Roberto Gonzàlez. https://www.tnc.cat/en/hort-de-les-oliveres (checked 21-12-2018).

heu vingut, which was first performed two years later in April 2017,[16] deals more directly with the impact of former Generalitat president Jordi Pujol's "betrayal" of the Catalan bourgeoisie, and explores the difficulty of forming new coalitions in its aftermath.

Xavier Albertí's (2015) prologue to the published text of Comadira's *L'hort de les oliveres* clearly inserts the play within its particular sociopolitical context, some months after the 9 November 2014 consultation process, and less than a year after public revelation of former president of the Generalitat Jordi Pujol's gross financial misdealings: "la trama de l'obra permet el retrat fascinant d'una burgesia en decadència suposadament garant de les essències nacionals" (Albertí 2015, 8). In this, the play is thematically very close to the work of Thomas Bernhard, a playwright who has been adapted for the Catalan stage on numerous occasions (including a September 2014 version of *El President* in the TNC, directed by Carme Portaceli) and also incorporates intertextual references to Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*.

Furthermore, for Albertí, the poetic force of the play "ens permet mirar amb profunditat excepcional – que no trobem a les infinites i esgotadores tertúlies polítiques dels mitjans de comunicació – el singular moment que viu la nostra cultura, sobre qui som, d'on venim o on volem anar" (2015, 8), thus directly referencing the potential power of theatre to go beyond the repetitive over-saturation of media narratives. Set in a fictional, provincial Riudejonc de les Arenes, in a country house located on a hill-top amidst olive groves, and overlooking the Mediterranean, the play presents a last supper on Holy Thursday, for which "the sacred family", the Bofills, have gathered together with their invited guests for the last time before the break-up of the house and land to sell to Russian speculators who wish to turn it into a high-class hotel and spa. There is a strong metafictional motif throughout, due to the presence of the poet and alter-ego of Comadira on stage, Narcís Cordelira. Played by Oriol Genís, the poet moves between directing or interpreting proceedings and participating in the dialogue and debates, thus encouraging the audience to take a reflexive and critical stance, ultimately leaving them to decide whether what they are seeing is vaudeville, comedy or tragedy.

> CORDELIRA: A estones sento un desig fortíssim d'escriure per al teatre un vòdevil o una comèdia...
> Això ho va escriure Txèkhov en una carta
> d'abans de *L'hort dels cirerers.*
> Jo, pobre poeta local,
> a vegades també sento aquest desig fortíssim.
> I finalment m'he decidit. No sé
> si serà un vòdevil o una comèdia o una tragèdia,
> o una mica de tot.
> Com serà? No ho sé? (Comadira, 2015, 13)

The conflict at the heart of the play is created by the son of the family's reluctance to give up his inheritance, by his wish to maintain the house and lands intact rather than to sell off the territory for economic gain. Even though he himself has in many ways broken with the tradition represented by his father — travelling to the US, studying literature and embracing his homosexuality —, he nevertheless resists

16 *A tots els que heu vingut*, by Marc Rosich. Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, Sala Petita, 6 April–7 May 2017. Directed by Marc Rosich. Scenography: Sebastià Brosa; Costumes: Mercè Paloma; Lighting: Quico Gutiérrez; Sound: Lucas Ariel Vallejos; Movement: Roberto G. Alonso; Characterization: Núria Linell; Audiovisual material: Francesc Isern. Cast: Mercè Aranega, Lurdes Barba, Montse Esteve, Àurea Márquez, Mireia Pàmies and Carles Gilabert. https://www.tnc.cat/en/a-tots-els-que-heu-vingut (checked 22-02-2019).

betraying the beliefs of a progenitor who "pensava, que fos de qui fos / tot continuaria igual per sempre" (Comadira 2015, 31). The dilemma of the family with respect to their "racó de món... aquesta finca arruïnada" (Comadira 2015, 27), and the willingness of most of them to sell on and adapt to the times, is clearly linked in debates between the characters to what is happening to Catalonia as a whole. As the family's lawyer and long-time friend, Frederic Riu complains:

> Ai, per aquest nostre país també és el final
> i ningú no se n'adona.
> Jo no hi vull ni pensar, perquè,
> si ho accepto,
> invalido,
> tota la meva vida.
> Tota una vida militant,
> tota una vida al partit
> per fer d'aquest país un país cohesionat,
> català... i ara
> quatre eixelebrats
> ho volen fer anar tot en doina...
> Catalunya independent!
> Es pensen que és possible?
> I si ho fos, i si ho aconseguissin,
> com seria aquest pas?
> On aniria a parar? A quines mans?
> Mans d'especuladors, d'incompetents,
> de gent sense cultura,
> de gent que no sap res del que hem estat,
> del que som... (Comadira 2015, 33–34)

The irony is that, as a representative of the same bourgeoisie who is willing to speculate with the land for financial gain, Frederic Riu nevertheless sees himself as someone who has represented the interests of Catalonia in aiming to maintain cohesion and *convivència* with Spain, presented, as in the work of Jordi Amat (2015; 2017) as a key condition for the maintenance of the Catalan tradition. Later in the play, his positioning is supported by others, such as the priest Mossèn Relats (Father Narratives), who declares "Hem d'evitar com sigui un vessament de sang /... / Renunciem a Catalunya, / sacrifiquem Catalunya, / a l'ara de la pau i de la convivència!" (Comadira 2015, 96).[17] In contrast, Guillem Bofill, the son and heir of the household, oscillates between a Hamlet figure who struggles to prevent "aquest crim que ara es perpetra / en contra del país, en contra vostra / i contra aquesta noble casa" (Comadira 2015, 39), a Christ-like figure who must sacrifice himself to the needs of the majority, or indeed a more Chekhovian figure, caught between the myths of progress and nostalgia for past traditions. The dilemma, "O tot o res. La qüestió és d'aquest mena" (Comadira 2015, 45), is, for Guillem's mother Felicitat, a choice between community and individual fulfilment: "Deixa't de pàtries i de nostàlgies. Només / tens una vida!" (Comadira 2015, 56). In contrast, for Cordelira, the choice is between between the rule of the market and the commitment to transcendence and singularity, represented in the Catalan language:

17 The priest's investment in the cultural trauma narrative of tragic fratricidal conflict, as disseminated in the later years of the Franco regime, is confirmed in Cordelira's response here: "Vós sempre tan tètric. Tot / us fa pensar en la guerra./ Si aviat farà cent anys de la guerra, home! / La independència serà incruenta!" (Comadira 2015, 96).

FIDEL: ...Massa
cuiners sense talent.
GUILLEM: Massa escriptors sense talent.
BRUNO: Massa empresaris sense talent.
FREDERIC: Massa polítics sense talent.
CORDELIRA: Això és la democràcia. Tothom igual
però enrasat per baix. (Comadira 2015, 95)

In response to the Bofill daughter's boyfriend Bruno's unionist defence of an ever more bilingual Catalonia, in honour of "cinc-cents anys / fent història amb Espanya..." (97), Cordelira insists: "Per mi, Catalunya és la llengua / [...] / Que la seva llengua sigui humiliada, / que mori lentamente / per desídia de tots, / un poeta no ho pot suportar..." (Comadira 2015, 98).

The play offers no clear solutions to the debates between the different characters and their competing narrative frames, and the Hamlet figure at its centre, Guillem Bofill, ultimately chooses to sacrifice himself, becoming a symbol of the landscape to which he is so attached. He is sublimated at the end in Albertí's powerful visual reimagining, reclining centre-stage in a bath and surrounded by the other characters. Suspended in this transitional state between life and death, the audience is left to decide the final outcome: whether to read as music hall, comedy or tragedy, the extent to which Guillem Bofill's life, and the landscape and coalitions he represents, are grievable.

In contrast, Marc Rosich's A *tots els que heu vingut*, although subtitled as *una tragèdia nacional*, in many ways is more reminiscent of the popular satirical work of Els Joglars, in its mediation of the financial scandal and political corruption associated with Jordi Pujol through the character of a recently widowed *Convergent* grandmother, Magda Casals de Clarà (Mercè Aranega again), who is devastated by the revelations about her cultural hero and begins a counter-relationship with a homeless anarchist who teaches her to curse. Also premiered in the Teatre Nacional de Catalunya, under the direction of Rosich, the play explores Magda's relationship with the different generations of women in her family – her sister Àgata, daughters Clara and Sandra Clarà Casals, and granddaughter Jana Zabala Clarà – against the backdrop of "[u]n compte enrere que comença un 25 de juliol de 2014, tot just quan esclata el cas Pujol, i acaba la tarda de l'11 de setembre de 2014" (Rosich 2017, 22). The entire play takes place within the space of Magda's flat, "Un típic pis antic de l'Eixample" which has been overlaid with the trappings of post-transition nouveau-riche Catalonia, and is full of images associated with *pujolisme*:

> *A totes les parets pengen fotografies de Jordi Pujol de mida i naturalesa diversa, pintures, puzles o pòsters de Montserrat i altres paisatges pirinencs (el Llac de Sant Maurici i els Encantats, el Pedraforca, la Vall de Núria, etc.), fotos d'actuacions i portades de discos de la Núria Feliu, banderoles del Barça, diferents representacions de les quatre barres de forma variat, així com tota mena de souvenirs d'excursionista genuïnament catalans.* (Rosich 2017, 22)

Magda's whole imaginary, built on Pujol's heroism and on the songs of Núria Feliu, from whom one of the counter-epigraphs to the published version is taken,[18] in

18 "M'enamoren els timadors / que fan mil trampes i semblen senyors. / Són tan hàbils, tan elegants. / Fan jugades que semblen jocs de mans. // Tinc un home que és timador / però quan m'estima, no em tima no, no" (Rosich 2017, 19). This follows on from one of the most famous poems associated with Catalan national identity: *Oda a la Pàtria* by Bonaventura Carles Aribau. The final lines "Mes, arrencat

a form of concentrated spectacle, is crashing down around her ears, and she begins to fraternize with L'Home de la Barba Bruta (Rafa Ayala), whom she first encountered begging outside of her local supermarket, and who initially refused her offer of charity. The focus on her own process of mourning and reconstruction after her hero's fall is deliberately juxtaposed with news of the attempts by the pro-independence movement to re-constitute itself and maintain momentum in the aftermath of the Pujol debacle, alongside the sense of media over-saturation we have encountered in relation to the *En Procés* cycle:

> JANA: La tanco. Sempre la 3/24! Tot el dia aquest canal en bucle i llavors clar que no sap quina hora és! (Rosich 2017, 58)

Magda herself sees no way forward, caught between nostalgia for the past, romantic escapism and righteous anger:

> I ara què, Jordi? Toca saltar. "Quan fas el Puigmal, el pitjor no és pujar fins al cim, el pitjor és la baixada." I com més amunt puges, més forta la trompada és després. Però aquest cop no hi ha xarxa. Ni amics que recullin els trossets. Molt de llorer caldrà ara perque tot quedi net. Zim-zam, zim-zam. No n'hi haurà prou en tot el país. Ni una sola branca de llorer quedarà en peu.
> Merda de país.
> L'HOME: Merda de país que ja no s'aguanta els pets. (Rosich 2017, 39)

In contrast, her sister, daughters, grand-daughter and even the character of L'Home de la Barba Bruta slowly re-group and begin to form new coalitions across the generations. Even so, in its constant shifting between emotional identification and ironic distancing, the play very clearly requires the audience to consider its own relationship to the action portrayed on stage, and to face the same contradictions faced by the characters:

> A veure [...] Si jo t'entenc. No hi ha res pitjor que el que ens ha passat. Estàs asseguda en la foscor de la sala, veient com està a punt d'arribar el final feliç i el ball dels títols de crèdit, i de sobte t'encenen els llums i t'adones, així sense transicions, que tot el que has viscut es ficció. I que, així, sense el final, et toca sortir al carrer i la veritat, la vida de veritat, és una altra. I que és lletja. (Rosich 2017, 74)

Behind the comic tone, and the initially extremely dynamic and effective satirical device of interspersing the action with the kitsch and derivative character of Núria Feliu's songs, the protagonists argue about the social, economic and political future of Catalonia: the precarious conditions in which the population is living, and the need for many of them to emigrate; the confusion of political messages and lack of clear governmental policies; the subordination of social solidarity to patriotism. The irony is that Magda is the only one who decides not to attend the latest public demonstration on 11 September 2014, yet her death at the end of the play leaves little space for debate. Instead, encouraged by her ghost on stage, the other characters begin to clear the house of the trappings of the 1980s and 1990s, destroying in order to reconstruct, as is her call earlier in the play, before her death.

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després per fats perseguidors, / ja no conec ni sent com en millors vegades; / així d'arbre migrat a terres apartades, / son gust perden los fruits e son perfum les flors" (Rosich 2017, 17), are re-framed because of this juxtaposition in terms of the alienating effect produced by the collapse of the figure of Jordi Pujol.

Both of these plays show the ways in which the competing public narratives circulating within social and cultural formations and institutions, such as the family, religion, education and the media, impact on the construction of personal narratives and affect the ways in which people experience loss, how they act in response. Their critical re-framing of these competing public narratives in terms of causal emplotment, relationality, selective appropriation, temporality and the spaces they portray, accentuates the shifting role of a particular social class in relation to the pro-independence movement, that of the Catalan bourgeoisie: its ambivalence towards social, political, cultural, economic and even linguistic change, and tendency to prioritize its own interests above those of the wider community. In this, both plays contribute to puncture external visions of Catalan nationalism that associate it with Catalan bourgeois self-interest, simultaneously critiquing the economic and cultural myths and narratives that had previously sustained the dominant public frame under Jordi Pujol.

Situated in relation to a critical juncture in *El Procés*, that of the undermining of certain moral and economic grounds for secession with the public unveiling of the corruption scandals surrounding the Pujol clan, its impact on different political groups and socio-cultural communities, and on events like the 11 September 2014 demonstration and the 9 November 2014 consultation on sovereignty, the plays provide a critical space in which to explore, trouble and tease out the intermingling of different personal, public, conceptual and master narratives. Both plays centre on figures, Guillem and Magda, who (despite their political differences) choose death (real and social) in the face of the confusion of narratives and the identity crises of which these are a symptom and contribute to perpetuate. Yet, instead of promoting nostalgia, both plays are more critical in regards to the question of how people respond to these losses, and hence to the other historical, actual and potential losses they symbolize: whether through denial, substitution, incorporation, mourning or melancholia. They place the limits of particular cultural trauma narratives on display.

Re-presentations of *El Procés* via on-stage translation: the case of La Perla 29

The final type of theatrical re-presentation of the Catalan independence movement for consideration concerns the use of translations of other, international cultural trauma narratives, here the long Irish struggle for independence, and their re-framing to reflect and speak to the local context. Both of the productions discussed are drawn from recent work by one Barcelona-based theatre company La Perla 29, and the influence of one director who has primarily worked with translations and adaptations of foreign classics, Oriol Broggi. If he has not been looked at in any great depth before in analyses of Catalan cultural production, it is no doubt because, unlike other directors, his work has not really travelled beyond the Catalan cultural space; indeed, it has almost been synecdochically linked for more than a decade to a very particular space beneath the Biblioteca de Catalunya in the former Hospital de la Santa Creu just off the Carrer de l'Hospital in Barcelona.

Broggi himself generally attributes his choices of particular texts to personal preference, youthful memory, nostalgia or inspiration, often linking them to the emotions that they awakened in him rather than any programmatic wish to explore a particular theme or philosophical question (see, for instance, Broggi 2016). Nevertheless, there is no doubt that many of these choices – including La Perla 29's acclaimed versions of Brian Friel's *Translations* (2014) and *Dancing at Lughnasa* (2015), as well as Broggi's own 2016 version of Francophone writer and journalist

Joseph Kessel's *Mary de Cork* (1925) – adapted as *Els cors purs* – call into play questions of interlingual and intercultural translation, and the relationships between different languages and cultures these processes enact and expose. Analysis of La Perla 29's work is also of relevance because it draws attention to a key feature of recent cultural production in Catalonia that distinguishes it from the all-too-familiar criticism of the period of normalization, that is, its multilingual cosmopolitanism, particularly in the city of Barcelona.

At the same time, the local debates to which Broggi's work, in particular, has given rise (because of his perceived side-lining of contemporary Catalan dramaturgy in favour of major European works in translation) raise important questions about cultural representation and production in a multilingual context underpinned by politically-enforced linguistic and cultural asymmetries – the extent to which the minoritized language itself (in this case, Catalan) is inevitably a site of intergenerational trauma that is not visible or translatable into a dominant, monolingual frame (such as that associated with narratives of the unity of the Spanish state).

Looking at Irish drama on the Catalan stage produces very interesting examples of translation of cultural trauma narratives (both because of what is and is not translated and when). Notwithstanding the visibility of Irish drama – and indeed the Irish conflict – at key moments in early twentieth-century Catalan history,[19] there had been relatively few re-stagings of Irish history in the Catalan theatre since the 1980s. But in the past five years there have been a series of productions of plays by Conor McPherson, Martin McDonagh and, above all, Brian Friel that indicate that Irish cultural trauma narratives are being translated to reflect on local conflict in two main keys.

On the one hand, versions of plays like Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa*, translated as *Dansa d'agost*, place emphasis on the resolution of conflict through the kind of intense cultural co-presencing (through shared stories, songs, dancing and general conviviality) that is a feature of the Biblioteca de Catalunya performance space. In them, elegiac reflection on a relatively idyllic rural past indicates we are witnessing the performance of memory as nostalgia, with an idealized Ireland being represented as a place of cultural cohesion and vibrancy. On the other hand, we have the case of *Translations*, rendered in Catalan as *Traduccions*, which is very clearly read in terms of contemporary political conflict in Catalonia, although the more nostalgic vision of rural Ireland is also maintained.

Here, I am going to focus mainly on Joan Sellent's 2014 translation of *Translations*, directed by Broggi's protégé Ferran Utzet, because it is in many ways an obvious candidate for considering the transmission and translatability of cultural trauma narratives.[20] Composed in 1980 as part of the Field Day project in Northern Ireland, and thus aimed at representing inclusively the culture of the whole of the island, it is a play that takes us back to before the partition of Ireland, to a rural context struggling to respond to the changes introduced by the presence of a colonizing force. The play portrays the domestication of the Irish landscape through the pragmatic activity of translating toponyms into English, and there is opportunity throughout the

19 For instance, Josep Burgas's *faux* Irish play *Jordi Erin* (1906) became popular amongst separatists in the early decades of the twentieth century and W. B. Yeats's *Cathleen Ní Houlihan* was the first Irish play translated into Catalan by Marià Manent in 1921, after the Free State treaty. Later Sean O'Casey's *Red Roses for Me* and Brian Friel's *Dancing at Lughnasa* formed the basis for emblematic adaptations, in 1976 and 1993 respectively.

20 *Traduccions*, by Brian Friel. Biblioteca de Catalunya, 30 January–9 March 2014. Translated by Joan Sallent. Directed by Ferran Utzet. Assistant Director: Joan Yago; Lighting: Guillem Gelabert; Costumes: Annita Ribera; Scenography; Maura Nylon; Sound: Damien Bazin; Projections: Francesc Isern; Carpentry: Pau Giménez; Calligraphy/Cartography: Ariadna Veas; Irish diction: Diarmuid Magourty. Cast: Enric Auquer, Jenny Beacraft, Ivan Benet, Òscar Intente, Montse Morillo, Albert Prat, Júlia Truyol, David Vert and Ramon Vila.

play for reflection on what these translations actually mean – the loss of past histories, the loss of memory, the minoritization, replacement and effacement of one language by another.

The whole story is of course recounted in the source text through English, and the mistrust and miscomprehension in the linguistic encounter is thus treated light-heartedly and humorously, even though the text itself is an example of the impact of this superficially harmless bureaucratic task and we are reminded that translation here does not ultimately achieve harmonious co-existence but is at the source of conflict.

Friel himself tended to present *Translations* as a text about language "and only language" (Friel 1983, 58), rather than having any other political intent. But the translation and reception in Catalan cannot help but bring to the fore the political, even though the two languages are portrayed through different registers of Catalan: rural and standardized Barcelona central dialects. This more overtly political reading is framed in two ways: on the one hand, the director draws attention in the programme and elsewhere to Friel's disingenuousness in disavowing that the play is about anything other than language; on the other hand, the reviews all draw attention to its relevance for the contemporary Catalan context, soon after the Ley Wert, which represented a Spanish government push to increase the presence of the Spanish language in Catalan schools.

Quotations from reviews selected for the online information pack prepared for the play's revival at the Temporada Alta in Girona include: "parla de nosaltres, no del país, de les emocions que sentim" (Andreu Gomila, *Time Out*); "*Traduccions* fa pensar molt en la incomprensió que es genera entre llengües i cultures diverses quan aquestes basen la seva relació en el domini, la colonització i la violència" (Xavier Antich, *La Vanguardia*); "El espectáculo es casi carnal. No debemos perdérnoslo porque, aunque situado en el siglo XIX, nos habla con amenidad y cierta brillantez de un tema que hoy en Catalunya nos concierne a todos" (María José Ragué, *El Mundo*), "*Traduccions / Translations* té un aire dramàtic que coincideix amb l'atac a la llengua per part d'un govern central gens persuasiu" (Jordi Bordes, *El Punt Avui*).[21]

Here, then, there appears to be very clear and deliberate re-framing of a cultural trauma narrative for use within a target context, and one that absolutely reflects changes in social narrative frames in the Catalan context. *Translations* would arguably not have been translatable into the Catalan context of the 1980s,[22] where self-congratulatory discourse about the success of linguistic immersion generally meant that the situation of Gaelic in Ireland, and the perceived abandonment of the Irish language, were incomprehensible.[23] Yet by 2014, there was clearly more willingness to understand the effects of forced translation by colonization, and indeed to understand and identify the Catalan situation in these terms,[24] even though the option is not taken to translate dominant and dominated into the relationship between Spanish and Catalan in this context.

Nevertheless the focus the play brings to bear on the almost wilful insistence on not understanding each other is very revealing, particularly in terms of what would

21 This information pack is available for consultation and reference at http://www.temporada-alta.net/downloads/translations_critiques.pdf (checked on 22-02-2019).

22 Even though there is a translation from 1984, by Josep Maria Balanyà, the fact that it was never used, let alone staged, until 2001 when it provided the surtitles for a tour of the acclaimed Abbey Theatre production (see González 2014) supports my argument here.

23 In contrast, the same director who was to stage *Dancing at Lughnasa* at the Teatre Lliure in 1993, Pere Planella, directed a version of *Translations* in Euskera in the Basque Country in 1988 (see González 2014).

24 For example, Ramon Oliver writes: "Llavors el sistema d'immersió lingüística semblava tan plàcidament consolidat [...] Però, ara amb tanta llei Wert, tant 'lapao' i tant decret de trilingüisme... aquella realitat consolidada sembla tornar a trontollar" (Oliver 2014).

later be seen in relation to traumatic events like the 17 August 2017 terrorist attack in Barcelona or the October events of the same year.[25] Furthermore, even though *Translations* was read largely in terms of a Catalan community trauma narrative, the language choices, and underlying heteroglossia of the play also made it perfectly possible to reflect linguistic hierarchies and imperialism within the Catalan-speaking territories and between central Catalan (as dominant language) and the other dialects and languages with which it shares a territory. Whilst I have not detected elements of the former in press reports, the latter is a feature of more sceptical reception of the play.

In contrast, the translational journey undergone by the second play I want to look at briefly appears far more complex and difficult to pin down. Based on a novella by Joseph Kessel, *Mary de Cork*, which was itself a rendering of the Irish Civil War for consumption by an uncomprehending French metropolis, *Els cors purs* was presented in the programme notes as a poetic story about love in times of war,[26] attempting to translate the competing trauma narratives behind the Irish Civil War of 1922–23 into a personal and intergenerational frame. Kessel's story is set after the War of Independence and the Anglo-Irish treaty that had followed on the heroism of figures like mayor of Cork Terence MacSwiney, whom the French writer had had the opportunity to meet whilst working as a journalist. Based on figures he met as a correspondent in Britain and Ireland, the French writer uses his imagined version of the Irish Civil War as a backdrop to a tragic, star-crossed love story, of two lovers – the married couple Art and Mary Beckett and their child – divided and destroyed by the war, where the husband (a former hero of the War of Independence) continues to fight with Michael Collins on behalf of the Free State and his wife joins the IRA and ultimately betrays him (with the unwitting help of her young son).

In order to make this story intelligible for an audience familiar with Irish struggles for independence but not necessarily with the Irish Civil War, Broggi draws on James Joyce's 1914 story "The Dead" in order to portray the son – here named Gerald – looking back from a context of nostalgia for a more convivial past.[27] Although clearly intended to help to mediate Kessel's more tightly focused narrative account, this introduced a major anachronism that simultaneously presented a very different cultural trauma narrative frame. The recasting was powerful, both because of the way in which it broke and challenged more typical visions of Ireland, and called for a deeper understanding of Irish history (than is perhaps possible or plausible for any audience that attended the play), and in the story it presented of a nation of openness and hospitality broken by conflict over the shape of the future, and in particular over the meaning of independence. It is precisely this change in frame that helps to explain how and why there has been such a turn to Irish themes in La Perla 29's productions over the past few years, suggesting that the nostalgia for a convivial, rural Ireland stands in for a desire to cling on to *convivència* in Catalonia, too. But such a version of history ultimately depends on the anachronistic placing of an early 1900's pre-independence

25 The use of Catalan in the bilingual press conferences at this time led to complaints and dissent by some journalist and media communities.

26 *Els cors purs*, based on Joseph Kessel, translated by Ramon Vila. Dramaturgy: Marc Artigau and Oriol Broggi. Teatre Romea, 10 May–19 June 2016. Directed by Oriol Broggi. Space: Oriol Broggi; Lighting: Pep Barcons; Costumes: Annita Ribera; Characterization: Àngels Salinas; Audiovisual Design: Francesc Isern; Sound: Roger Abalos and Damien Bazin. Cast: Borja Espinosa, Miranda Gas and Jacob Torres. Musicians: Carles Pedregosa, Júlia Ribera and Marc Serra.

27 In such a context Gerald's performance of Gabriel's nostalgic after-dinner piece, in which the nation's essential hospitality – "I feel more strongly with every recurring year that our country has no tradition which does it so much honour and which it should guard so jealously as that of its hospitality. It is a tradition that is unique as far as my experience goes (and I have visited not a few places abroad) among the modern nations" (Joyce 2012, 198) – is represented as coming under threat from a new generation of idealists, appears as a critique of the post-revolutionary culture of a newly independent Ireland rather than the critique Joyce intended of the inward-looking tendencies of the Celtic Revival.

setting imbued by Dublin-based critical nostalgia, after the struggle for independence, and thus to the suggestion that Ireland might have been better off under colonial rule.

Whatever the case, the re-framing of *Mary de Cork* as *Els cors purs* produces a traumatic translation that draws attention to the limits of transmission and translatability of narratives of cultural trauma, whilst at the same time evoking the power of theatre to offer a meeting place for opposing frames. It is just that here, unlike Žižek's call for the "politicisation of culture" (Zizek 2008, 119), Broggi appears to opt for the "culturalization of politics", for a solution that translates problems of inequality, exploitation or injustice, into problems of cultural (in)tolerance. Even so, like the other examples considered in this article, drawn from across the Catalan theatre landscape, *Els cors purs* does not only re-frame a particular cultural trauma narrative but presents directors, actors and audiences with the opportunity to negotiate different frames for understanding reality by trying out different perspectives and exposing the limits of the spectacle. The opportunities theatre offers for interaction between actors and audience in a shared space, as understood by Duprey (2014, xvii) in *The Aesthetics of the Ephemeral*, render it a "material praxis or [...] thinking topology... [that] constitutes a political space". In this way, the plays discussed here do not just transmit particular cultural trauma narratives and social narrative frames, but contribute to expose, critique and/or re-frame their operation and explore their relationality, opening up the possibility for audiences to scrutinize and reconsider their own positioning, and hence the personal and public narratives they recognize and construct for themselves and others.

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