CORA Cork Open Research Archive
Cartlann Taighde Oscailte Chorcaí

Title	Traumatic translations of La plaça del Diamant: on the transmission and translatability of cultural trauma
Authors	Buffery, Helena
Publication date	2015
Original Citation	Buffery, H. (2015) 'Traumatic translations of La plaça del Diamant: on the transmission and translatability of cultural trauma', in Fernàndez, J.-A. and Subirana, J. (eds.) Funcions del passat en la cultura catalana contemporània. Institucionalització, representacions i identitat. Lleida, Spain: Editorial Punctum, pp. 197-217.
Type of publication	Book chapter
Link to publisher's version	http://www.editorialpunctum.com/coeditors/identicat/funcions-del-passat-en-la-cultura-catalana-contemporania-institucionalitzacio-representacions-i-identitat/
Rights	© 2015, Helena Buffery. Reproduced with permission of Editorial Punctum.
Download date	2026-10-30 00:18:31
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/3885

UCC
University College Cork, Ireland
Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh

TRAUMATIC TRANSLATIONS OF *LA PLAÇA DEL DIAMANT*: ON THE TRANSMISSION AND TRANSLATABILITY OF CULTURAL TRAUMA

Helena Buffery
University College Cork

In relation to the recent staging in Spanish of his 2003 adaptation of Mercè Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*, acclaimed director Joan Ollé recently declared that in any normal country the novel would be a place of memory.[1] His comments reminded me of Ulrich Winter's insistence in 2005 that Pierre Nora's formulation of the *lieux de mémoire* as modernity's primary strategies for selecting, preserving and maintaining a sense of relation to the past could not be applied in the case of Spain. Indeed, for Winter (2005, 17) the dominant cultural expressions of Spain's relationship to its recent past are traumatic ones: those of the monsters and ghosts that haunt the cinema and literature of the turn of the century. More recent questioning of the perceived obsession with historical memory since the 1990s, culminating in Javier Cercas's almost excessively theatrical *mea culpa* in his narrative disassembling of the figure of Enric Marco in *El impostor* (2014), are equally readable in terms of what Michael Richards (2013) refers to as competing narratives of cultural trauma, underlining the need to look at the evolution of post-war memory in relational and processual terms.

Richards espouses the concept of cultural trauma as a more precise alternative to that of now-ubiquitous "cultural memory" because it is concerned with processes of memory construction associated with "pasts related specifically to suffering or sacrifice" (Richards 2013, 2). He is nevertheless careful to disassociate his own usage from the increasing tenden-

[1] His words were rather amusingly recounted in El Mundo as follows: "Dice Joan Ollé… que si España fuese un país serio Mercè Rodoreda sería tan famosa como Madame Bovary" (Blanco 2015).

cy to collapse understandings of individual and social trauma in order to defend the need for particular memory work, advocating instead a historicised contextualisation of trauma narratives and recognition that social and political agency is required in the construction of cultural trauma:

> The ambivalence of cultural trauma, the tension between avoidance of painful or shameful events and reliving or reconstructing them, is explicable only in terms of social process, including the formation of collective identities and generational evolution, and of finding solutions to the problems thrown up by change. (Richards 2013, 4)

The idea I wish to explore further in this chapter is that the translation of narratives of real or imagined individual or collective trauma demands negotiation of complex, shifting and sociohistorically contingent relationships between violence, memory, and affect. Before moving to look at the case of *La plaça del Diamant*, and more specifically the way in which the functions of the past are rewritten and transmitted in translations and reinterpretations of Rodoreda's classic novel, it is important to address the relationship of translation to trauma, in what I have loosely formulated as "traumatic translations".

Why traumatic translations?

For Jan Parker, "Translation specifically highlights issues relating to trauma, a specific situation in which repetition and blockage of representation are paradoxically intertwined" (Parker and Mathews 2011, 22). On the one hand, translation is invoked repeatedly in different aspects of the literature on trauma, whether from a psychoanalytical, political, pedagogical or cultural perspective. Whereas for some cultural analysts and therapists (for instance, Felman and Laub 1992) the process of translation of the experience of traumatic events into language has a therapeutic or pedagogical function, for others this function is limited either by the impossibility of translation (Caruth 1996), the confusion of narratives produced (Langer 1993), or the inability of the receiver to access the truth of trauma (Tal 1996). For Herman (1992, 1): "Remembering and telling the

truth about terrible events are prerequisites both for the restoration of the social order and for the healing of individual victims". Yet there is also recognition that reliving such events when involuntary has the destructive and melancholic potential to disrupt the restorative process. As will become apparent in considering examples from actual translations, increasingly there is recognition of the ambivalence of the translation of trauma: its tendency towards repetition and retraumaticisation; its in-between, processual status, both as a sign of the overcoming of trauma and as a symptom of its continuing legacy.

On the other hand, the process of translation itself, in its association with temporal and spatial displacement of origins, with repetition, with anxiety over the relationship to the source text, identity and equivalence, might be considered to be structurally analogous to trauma. In one of the most influential modernist essays on the task of the translator, the act of translation was articulated as a traumatic one, characterised by birth pangs and afterlives (Benjamin 1923), and later, in "Translation and the Trials of the Foreign", Antoine Berman (1985) catalogues the violence undergone by the original in the process of being transferred into another language. Recognising the multiple valencies of the relationship between trauma and translation, Parker and Mathews (2011) seek not only to explore the different ways in which trauma and violence are translated, how they reveal and respond in the process to gaps in intercultural exchange, but also begin to ask ethical questions around what the role of the translator should be. To these dilemmas it is necessary to add the question of how to mediate and receive traumatic translations, in recognition of recent foregrounding of the relationship between narrator and audience as key to the therapeutic, pedagogical and ultimately ethical and political affordances of trauma narratives. Dominick LaCapra's call for a critical and self-reflexive empathy, encapsulated in the concept of "empathic unsettlement" (2001, 22), and Kaja Silverman's (1996) "heteropathic identification", predicated on openness to a mode of existence or experience beyond what is known by the self, are influential examples in this respect.

In approaching and mediating different versions of *La plaça del Diamant*, including three interlingual translations into English and one fictional account of its role in an individual's process of self-translation into Catalan, I am most interested in reading the ways in which the temporal and

spatial dislocation of translation contributes both to mask and to reveal processes of memory construction associated with traumatic pasts, that is, what successive translations can tell us about the shifting functions of the past in contemporary Catalonia. They will be read as traumatic translations both because, at the most obvious level, they constitute attempts to translate a fictional narrative of individual and collective trauma, and because of the way in which they retrace the limits of translatability of cultural trauma. The anxiety they reveal in relation to origins brings to light aspects of the source text that might not have been fully available to the reader otherwise, that only really become visible through apprehension of what is and is not translatable at any given moment. When read relationally, as I will attempt to do here, they demand a change in disposition on the part of the reader towards the source text and cultural context, one that recognises and seeks to traverse the temporal and spatial distance underpinning cultural difference, and accedes to participate openly in the remaking of embodied selves through language.

Translating Cultural Trauma: The case of La plaça del Diamant *in English*

The main case to be studied here relates to the interlinguistic translation of narratives of individual and cultural trauma expressed in fictional form. I have chosen not to look specifically at the case of testimony, because in such cases the translator is ultimately more restricted ethically in negotiating the tension between personal and collective trauma and its potential for reappropriation in the process of re-languaging. In contrast, when this tension is expressed fictionally, it can be argued that it is just one of many elements that the translator might have to elect to lose or gain in translation. The choice of Mercè Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant* was informed by its status as a place of memory in contemporary Catalan culture, perhaps most visible in the construction in 1984 of a monument to Colometa in the very square to which the novel refers.[2]

[2] This was both one of the earliest monumental interventions in the recovery and reinscription of Barcelona as a Catalan public space after the end of the Franco dictatorship and one of the only architectural places of memory to be based on a literary source.

First published in Catalan in 1962, the novel has achieved remarkable success, particularly for a text produced in a minority language whose international cultural invisibility was structurally enshrined by linguistic, cultural and political repression during the Franco regime.

Translated into Spanish in 1965, it has since been translated into 30 languages, including three translations into English: *The Pigeon Girl* by Eda O'Shiel (1967); *The Time of the Doves* by David Rosenthal (1981); and, most recently, *In Diamond Square* by Peter Bush (2013). A closer look at the history of the novel's translation and reception nevertheless reveals it to be a more contested space than might at first appear, characterised by persistent criticism of perceived misrepresentations of its cultural specificity. Resina (1987), Short (1995) and Ugarte (1999) all question the insufficient historical awareness displayed by anglo-feminist readings of the novel, calling for fuller attention to the sociohistorical placing of Colometa's traumatic experiences, while Culleton (2002), Fernàndez (1999) and Resina (2008) have developed powerful readings in terms of cultural memory, trauma and mourning.

Yet it is the perceived need for multiple retranslations into English in the 50 years since the novel's first publication together with repeated criticism of translators' failure to transmit either the particular socioculturral context (Andreu-Besó 1999; Keown 2005; Marín-Dòmine 2003) or, in the case of Miguélez-Carballeira (2003) the contributions of gender-based readings, to which I wish to respond here, as symptoms of blockage and repetition that might provide insights into the novel as a narrative of cultural trauma. Peter Bush's own reflections on the process of translating the novel (2013a; 2013b), in which he defends O'Shiel and Rosenthal from academic criticism in order to vindicate the ethical agency of the translator in the worlding of literary texts, are both culturally and historically sensitive and refreshingly honest about the inevitability of some degree of subordination of the "local" in translation. However, in the particular case of *La plaça del Diamant*, where individual and collective trauma are so intricately intertwined, it is, as in the case of testimony, often the apparently insignificant detail that impacts on the interpretation of the past. Rosenthal recognises this in the introduction to his own translation, when he writes:

> In a sense, *The Time of the Doves* is the story of most Spaniards during the 1930s and 1940s. But more profoundly it explores what it feels like to be an ordinary woman in a Mediterranean country. […] A victim of history, she nonetheless lacks any historical sense. The book's densely packed detail gives… an almost hypnotic intensity and draws the reader into Natalia's private horrors. (Rosenthal 1981, n.p.)[3]

When I teach this novel to English-speaking students of Hispanic Studies, one of the first things I ask them to do is imagine the content from the title of each of the English translations. *The Pigeon Girl* transmits a sense of realist female *bildungsroman* focused on a humble rural or suburban setting; *The Time of the Doves* gives a sense of a more poetic or romantic and nostalgic love story, although the title has also been read as one that evokes the years of the Second Republic and Civil War, particularly when juxtaposed with reference to Picasso in Rosenthal's prologue (Marín-Dòmine 2003); *In Diamond Square* conveys the kind of epic, wartime flavour familiar to international readers of fiction about the interwar years and World War II, although Bush (2013a and b) has indicated that the title was ultimately the publisher's choice. We are faced with three very different stories and perspectives, which to a certain extent are reinforced in the strategies of the translators. Peter Bush, for instance, makes a very radical decision to translate the names of the main protagonists, unusual in his practice, but which—perhaps paradoxically—reflects a strong ethical inclination to break with the possibility of overly decontextualised, romantic or poetic readings of the novel (Bush 2013b). He flags up the working class origins of the characters, which might too easily have been lost in names like Quimet, Cintet and Colometa, by calling the main protagonists Joe and Pidgie. Eda O'Shiel's translation recasts Natàlia/Colometa's voice with a Hiberno-English idiom and lilt that is able to combine the different valencies of the narrative voice con-

[3] Compare with Joan Prat's letter to Rodoreda from Vienna: "El llibre té, a més, tantes facetes que mai no s'acaba de copsar tot. I en el centre, en el fons, hi ha una mena de buit, com el buit d'una gerra, una mena de buit metafísic, que és el buit de no-res que hi ha darrera de totes les sensacions, passions i sentiments, i que et va sortir per miracle, encara no sé com", 10 May 1962.

vincingly.[4] David Rosenthal's translation elaborates a more poetic register, although he ultimately downplays the harshness of the main character's life, and tends to infantilise her more than is warranted from the original, where there is evolution in the language she uses in the course of narrating her history.

The disparity in framing of the English versions may in part be explained by the different moments of publication, which in turn reflect the development of shifting and competing narratives of cultural trauma. Eda O'Shiel (de Sagarra)'s 1967 version is the second translation of the novel to appear in any language, in a period when translations of contemporary Spanish fiction into English were relatively rare. It is O'Shiel's personal and intimate history, through marriage to a Catalan, that provides her with access to 1960s Catalan literary production; in Rodoreda's published correspondence from the period, it is reported that O'Shiel's desire to translate emerges from her own personal reader response (see, for instance, Rodoreda and Sales 2008, 238). Furthermore, this affective inclination is marked also in the procedures followed in the translation itself: of the three translations, hers is the most literal, transmitting a sense of intimate attention to the often repetitive details of everyday life and language. The relative silence around O'Shiel's translation surely reflects the context in which it is translated, of muted critical responses, lack of international knowledge of Catalan culture, and the continued silencing of the Catalan language. In contrast, David Rosenthal's translation appears after the first democratic elections, constitution of the Generalitat de Catalunya, and Rodoreda's reception of the Premi de les Lletres Catalanes in 1980, in a context in which the novel itself was becoming a potent place of memory both of Catalan cultural trauma (leading to the creation of a monument in Diamond Square) and later of the social alienation and oppression of women in twentieth century Spain. Indeed, it is arguably academic attention to the latter which fuels the release of the paperback editions of Rosenthal's translation in 1986. Finally, Bush's translation was commissioned by Virago and timed to coincide with the

[4] Both Andreu-Besó (1987) and Marín-Dòmine (2003) erroneously identify the linguistic variant used in *The Pigeon Girl* as British English, and thus fail to appreciate the way in which the rhythm of O'Shiel's translation successfully transmits a simultaneously colloquial and poetic oral register.

fiftieth anniversary of the novel's initial publication. The choice of title, as we have seen, places it in a market where translations of novels about war and conflict in 1930s and 1940s Europe have achieved exceptional sales figures (above all after the publication of Irène Nemirovsky's *Suite Française*). Yet the translation is also marked by the style and agency of its translator, who sets out to recover and represent markers of class as well as gender and ethnicity, and chooses to place the novel in dialogue with other international literary intertexts that provide working class perspectives on political conflict in the 1930s and 1940s (Bush 2013b). Furthermore, it is framed by affective engagement with the intergenerational memory of wartime and postwar hardship transmitted to the translator personally by his mother (Bush 2013a), perhaps explaining why his reading tends towards the positive resolution of trauma rather than reinscribing the ambivalence characteristic of narratives of cultural trauma.

Basically a long first-person description of the life of the main character Natàlia/Colometa in her own haunting voice, characterised by its oral, stream of consciousness style, the careful interweaving in *La plaça del Diamant* of personal and collective trauma, punctuated by overbearing silence, is what gives it the quality of testimony to cultural trauma. If not entirely a psychological realist novel, there is no doubt that it draws on psychoanalytic ideas and motifs in order to indicate to the reader that we are in the presence of trauma. Indeed, there are numerous readings of the novel that present it as a form of therapeutic narrative, particularly in anglo-feminist scholarship, where focus is placed on its representation of a woman's struggle to overcome gender discrimination, alienation and violence. However, the ending of the novel, which I have compared systematically across the different versions in preparing this piece, has presented particular problems from this and other perspectives, ultimately because of la Senyora Natàlia's seemingly unquestioning acceptance of relegation to the domestic sphere at the end. Counter readings have insisted on seeing the novel in the context of a particular community of memory, the defeated of the Spanish Civil War, and especially in the context of the Catalan-speaking community whose use of their language and performance of cultural practices was confined to the home during the post-war decades covered by the novel. But this has led to other questions, such as how to read the last word in Catalan, "contents". Should

it be read in terms of resignation? Or is there the possibility of a more emancipatory reading as in Fernàndez (1999), where the final section of the novel, in which Natàlia leans into, embraces and caresses the non-normative body of her mutilated second husband, is interpreted as celebration of resistance to the heteronormative logic of the Francoist regime?

Let us turn to consider where the translators stand in their micro-choices in the final chapter, always bearing in mind that there are multiple possible readings. For instance, Mercè Ibarz, when correcting the translation of her Joan Gili Memorial lecture for the Anglo-Catalan Society in 2007, was absolutely insistent that the last word of the novel could not possibly be translated as "happy", as this implied a greater feeling of fulfilment than in the Catalan original,[5] even though Rodoreda in her personal correspondence often indicates that Natàlia is "feliç" in her life with Antoni at the end. More recently, in a monologue adapted from the novel, with Colometa played in Spanish by Lolita Flores,[6] the register chosen was far closer to melodrama than the containment I normally imagine when reading the novel, and the performance of the final word was a more ambivalent "contentos…?"

> Rodoreda (1962): L'aigua era freda i em vaig enrecordar que el dia abans, a l'hora del casament, havia plogut fort i vaig pensar que a la tarda, quan aniria al parc com sempre, potser encara trobaria un toll d'aigua pels caminets… […] o uns quants ocells cridaners que baixaven de les fulles com llampecs, es ficaven al toll, s'hi banyaven estarrufats de ploma i barrejaven el cel amb fang i amb becs i amb ales. Contents…

> O'Shiel (1967): The water was cold and I remembered the day before, in the morning at the time for the wedding it had rained hard and I thought, in the afternoon, when I'd go to the park as usual, maybe there'd still be pools of water along the paths… […] and some noisy birds who would shoot down from the leaves like lightning, flop into the pool and have their bath, fluffing out their feathers and mingling mud and beaks and wings with the sky. Content…

[5] When I have discussed the evoked meaning of "contents" with other native Catalan speakers, they have invariably rejected translation as "happy", although both "content" and "contented" are considered to be equally unsatisfactory.

[6] *La plaza del Diamante*, dir. Joan Ollé. Teatre Goya, April 2015.

> Rosenthal (1981): The water was cold and I remembered how the morning before when it was time for the wedding it had rained hard and I thought maybe that afternoon when I went to the park like usual there'd still be a puddle in one of the paths… […] or a bunch of chattering birds who'd fly down from the leaves like lightning bolts and dive into the puddle and swim around with their feathers all ruffled and mix up the sky with mud and beaks and wings. Happy…

> Bush (2013): The water was cold and I remembered how the day before, on the morning of the wedding, it had poured down and I thought how that afternoon, when I went to the park as usual, I might still find puddles on the side paths…. […] or shrieking out of the foliage like flashes of lightning, several birds would swoop down for a quick bath in the puddle, ruffling their feathers and then wiping the mud, their beaks and their wings all over the sky. Happy…

Whereas O'Shiel maintains the more tentative (but also more formal in English) "Content…", Bush and Rosenthal go for a more dreamy and expansive "Happy", thus removing the ambivalence of cultural trauma, and breaking away from the motif of enclosure and containment that is revisited throughout the final chapter, as in the following example.

> Rodoreda (1962): Perquè tot era així: carreteres, carrers i passadissos i cases per ficar-se dins com un corc dins d'una fusta.

> O'Shiel (1967): Because that was all there was: highroads and streets and corridors and houses to slip into like the woodworm in the wood.

> Rosenthal (1981): Because everything was like that: roads and streets and hallways and houses you could burrow into like a termite in a trunk.

> Bush (2013): Because it was all the same: roads, streets, passages and houses where you lived like a worm in a lump of wood.

Both sets of translations display strategies of explicitation, standardisation and disambiguation, often considered to be universals of the trans-

lation process. We will see these strategies repeated again and again in these translators' rendering of the final chapter of the novel, which in some ways contribute to attenuating rather than highlighting the experience and presence of trauma, but which, when read together, reproduce symptoms of blockage and repetition redolent of the ambivalence associated with cultural trauma narratives. Here, for instance, the ambivalence conveyed by the collocation of the more familiar, safe and comforting "ficar-se dins" with the animalistic simile of the woodworm in a plank of wood, is subtly resolved by all three of the translators.

The signs of personal and collective trauma come thick and fast in the final chapter of Rodoreda's novel, which is partly structured as closure, with the narrator facing up to and overcoming trauma, but simultaneously includes elements of continuing post-traumatic stress in the degree of narrative repetition. Symptoms recounted include difficulty in sleeping, poor concentration, attempts at detachment through obsessive compulsive interaction with everyday objects, a tendency to be easily startled, flashbacks, increased anxiety and emotional arousal (in particular in relation to the sense of smell), avoidance of the past, loss of control, intense physical reactions such as nausea and muscle tension, as well as the presence of intrusive, upsetting memories and even hallucination in the section leading up to Natàlia's scream of release after being propelled by external forces through her former life. In the three translations of the passages reproduced below we can glimpse alongside subtle differences in attitude towards the degree of purposefulness of her walking 'in', 'for' or 'through', a more general tendency to standardise her syntax and, in the case of Bush, to mark her agency more strongly.

> Rodoreda (1962): I em vaig posar a caminar per la meva vida vella fins que vaig arribar davant de la paret de casa, sota de la tribuna… […] i, com d'esma, vaig posar-me a caminar i les parets em duien que no els meus passos…

> O'Shiel (1967): And I started to walk in my old life until I got to the wall of the house, beneath the tribune… […] and then without realising what I was doing I started to walk and it was the walls and not my steps which carried me along…

> Rosenthal (1981): And I started walking for my old life till I reached my old building and stood under the bay window… […] || And without thinking I started walking again and the walls carried me along more than my own footsteps…
>
> Bush (2013): And I started walking through my old life until I was opposite our old house, under the bay window… […] and, not thinking, I started walking and followed the walls rather than my footsteps…

After succeeding in returning to her past home, where she ends up inscribing her name on the door to the building, and the moment of release as she returns to the Plaça del Diamant, we see her return to her current home and slowly take control of both her surroundings and her physical movements, in a process of coming to terms with her new condition.

> Rodoreda (1962): I jo, expressament, caminava a poc a poc, ara un peu, ara l'altre, i anava entrant… els peus em duien i eren peus que havien caminat molt […]
>
> O'Shiel (1967): On purpose I walked slowly, now one foot, now the other, and I went on in… my feet carried me on, and they were feet that had walked far […]
>
> Rosenthal (1981): And I deliberately walked slowly, first one foot and then the other, and made my way … My feet carried me along and they were feet that had done a lot of walking […]
>
> Bush (2013): And I deliberately walked very slowly, dragging my feet, and slowly… my feet were guiding me and were feet that had covered a lot of ground […]

So the culmination of the narrative in the final chapter would appear to be also the story of her walking and working through the past. Yet, the form and style of the narrative—filled with repetition, attention to apparently irrelevant details, temporal confusion, constant jumping between time frames, shifts in transitivity and agency, and ambivalence—

is indicative of continuing trauma. In each of the translations, however, we see a tendency to normalise the narrative voice to different degrees, through the reduction or elision of repeated structures, and the introduction of more standard word order and punctuation, particularly in the case of Rosenthal, whose version even introduces additional paragraph breaks, interrupting the flow of the original, as we have seen above.

> Rodoreda (1962): I mentre pensava així van néixer les olors i les pudors. Totes. Empaitant-se, fent-se lloc i fugint i tornant: l'olor de terrat amb coloms i l'olor de terrat sense coloms i la pudor de llexiu que quan vaig ser casada vaig saber quina mena de pudor era. I l'olor de sang que ja era com un anunci d'olor de mort.

> O'Shiel (1967): And while I was thinking these things, the smells started coming, the good ones and the bad ones. All of them. Jostling, making room for each other, disappearing and returning: the smell of the flat roof with pigeons and the smell of the flat roof without the pigeons and the smell of the bleach that I only got to know when I got married. And the smell of blood which was really a message for the smell of death.

> Rosenthal (1981): And while I was thinking about all this the smells and the stenches started. All of them. Chasing each other around, shoving each other out of the way and running away and coming back: the smell of the roof with the doves on it and the smell of the roof without the doves and the stench of bleach that I already knew when I got married. And the smell of blood like a warning of the smell of death.

> Bush (2013): And while I was thinking those thoughts, the smells and the stench began. Every kind. Chasing each other, finding a space, disappearing, then coming back: the smell of our terrace with and without pigeons and the stench of bleach, a stench I really discovered when I got married. And the smell of blood heralding the smell of death.

The tendency to replace more precise and restrictive terms with superordinates and to soften abject imagery can be seen in all three versions above and below, alongside strategies of explicitation, disambiguation

and standardisation. To them must be added the numerous cases of reduction of temporal confusion by avoiding unexpected shifts in tenses, as exemplified by all three translations in the following sample:

> Rodoreda (1962): I la senyora Enriqueta m'havia dit que teníem moltes vides, les unes entreteixides amb les altres, però que una mort o un casament, de vegades, no sempre, les separava, i la vida de debò, lliure de tota mena de fils de vida petita que l'havien lligada, podia viure com hauria hagut de viure sempre si les vides petites i dolentes l'haguessin deixada sola. I deia, les vides entreteixides es barallen i ens martiritzen i nosaltres no sabem res com no sabem el treball del cor ni el gran neguit dels budells…
>
> O'Shiel (1967): And Senyora Enriqueta used to say that we had many lives, interwoven, but a death or wedding can separate them, not necessarily though, and that one's real life, free from the threads of the mean life which had bound it up, could live then as it was meant to be, if the mean, wicked lives had let it alone. And she used to say that the lives that were interwoven would fight with one another and make martyrs of us although we didn't realise what's going on, just as we aren't aware of the big job our heart is doing or the goings on in our guts…
>
> Rosenthal (1981): And Senyora Enriqueta always told me we had many interwoven lives and sometimes but not always a death or a marriage separated them. And life itself, free from the threads of those little lives that tied it down, could keep on living by itself the way it would have had to do if all those bad little lives hadn't bothered it. And she said those little interwoven lives fight and torture us and we don't know what's going on just like we don't know how hard our hearts work or how our guts suffer…
>
> Bush (2013): And Mrs Enriqueta once told me we live many lives and they all get entangled, and a death or a wedding couldn't always untangle them, and that real life, free from the threads of petty lives that twisted round it, could be lived as it should be lived providing petty and ne'er-do-well lives left it alone. And she went on, these entangled lives quarrel and torment us and we don't know it's happening, just as we don't know how our heart works or how our intestines cope…

In Bush's translation above, recourse to explicitation has gone beyond disambiguation of the original to produce an opposing point of view, where he renders "però que una mort o un casament, de vegades, no sempre, les separava" as "and a death or a wedding couldn't always untangle them". However, like that of Rosenthal, his version introduces compensatory strategies to evoke the voice of Senyora Enriqueta that indicate sensitivity to the plurivocity of the narrative.

In many ways, the shifts in these translations are minor at sentence level and simply affirm what translation scholars have come to expect of interlingual translation: the tendency to standardise, make more explicit, generalise, and also to aim for believable, unmarked, accessible language. Indeed, it could be argued that these shifts are even more necessary in the case of a cultural history about which readers might know little or nothing, or, as in the case of Civil War-torn Barcelona, where what they do know will tend to be in an epic or heroic vein. In all three cases the procedures at micro-level are largely consistent with each translator's overarching reading and translation strategy. There is no doubt that they tend towards a translation aimed at understanding rather than one which transmits the process and interweaving of personal and collective trauma to the same degree as the original. Yet to a certain extent one would not be as aware of these characteristics—of this metaphysical void behind and between the lines of repetition and obsessive attention to seemingly minor details—without reading the translations and seeing what has had to be jettisoned, standardised, or explained in order to be acceptable for an English-language reader: the connotative and emotional meanings that are missed in the gaps and the silences. Juxtaposition of the translations affords a glimpse of a complex history of real and symbolic violence, collective memory, and shifting affective inclinations. Together they bring into relief the relationship between memory, violence, and affect, and help us to hear and glimpse another identity, through the cultural trauma narrative in which it is embedded.

Revisiting Individual and Cultural Trauma through Self-translation: El Hachmi, Bush and Rodoreda

The same kind of affective reorientation produced in comparing multiple translations of the same text can be observed in a slightly different way in another traumatic translation, marked by the relationship between Moroccan-Catalan novelist Najat El Hachmi's *L'últim patriarca* and Rodoreda again, as mediated by Bush. Once again we are presented with a female first person narrator, who begins to tell what appears to be the story of the last patriarch, her father Mimoun. This is a story of multiple instances of personal and collective violence and trauma, child abuse, poverty, gender violence, migration, and racism, in which the question of origins is subtly distanced and displaced from the very beginning. Let's look at the opening in English, section 0 in the original, but without this title in Bush's version:

> This is the story of Mimoun… It is his story and the story of the last of the great patriarchs who make up the long line of Driouch's forbears…. Every single one lived, acted and intervened in the lives of those around them as resolutely as the imposing figures of the Bible. […] We know little about what shapes a great or mediocre patriarch, their origin is lost in the beginning of time, and origins are of no interest to us here. […] No son of his will identify with the spirit of authority that preceded him or try to emulate similar discriminatory and dictatorial attitudes. […] This is the only truth we want to tell you, the truth about a father who has to grapple with the frustrations of seeing his destiny unfulfilled and a daughter who, entirely unintentionally, changed the history of the Driouchs forever.

If the first half of the novel focuses on Mimoun and his violent and often hypocritical ways, then the second is far more concerned with the developing subjectivity and agency of the daughter as she begins to learn a new language, through reading the Catalan dictionary and Catalan women writers (including, significantly, Mercè Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*), and undertakes a process of self-translation framed as central to her emancipation. The narrative of overcoming is, however, once

again severely undermined by the ending, in which the newly independent daughter, separated from her husband, achieves what Bush has previously rendered as "entirely unintentional" revenge on her father and the definitive frustration of the Driouch's destiny by allowing herself to be seduced and entered from behind by the Moroccan uncle who her father suspects impregnated his wife. For the attentive reader, this is an openly displayed transgenerational mirroring of the more secretive, between-the-lines version of Mimoun's own childhood rape by his uncle at a village wedding.

In contrast with Mimoun's silenced and helpless experience of abuse, which may or may not—remember the novel makes a point in the above preamble of indicating it has no interest in origins—have resulted in his later narcissism and violence against those around him, the language used by the narrator in the final chapter indicates some degree of control, even when insisting that the rather theatrical "revenge with a vengeance" (in Bush's translation) was not planned, and that she derives physical pleasure as well as pain from the experience. However, as many critics have noted, it is deeply troubling as an emancipatory narrative, and is marked by ambivalence.

The shifts in Bush's translation are relatively minor ones compared even with the versions of *La plaça del Diamant*, which I wish to reiterate, do not ultimately interfere with the reader's overall understanding or enjoyment of the text. Once again, certain aspects of the source text are thrown into relief. The level of matter-of-factness, precision and often marked emotional detachment of the narrative is generally enhanced in the translation. Most important of all, however, is the way in which some of the narrator's ambivalence over agency is resolved in the translation. These almost imperceptible shifts become most apparent in the final chapter, bringing home the discomfort about the ending, and how it places us in the presence of traumatic translations. On the one hand, applying theories that attempt to explain the genealogy of violence and/in traumatic repetition, the ending presents a very clear case of transgenerational transmission that is apparently—but now we see ambivalently—denied in the Catalan introduction by the formula "sense haver-s'ho proposat". Here Bush's translation as "entirely unintentionally" does not maintain the temporal marking and contingency of the original; she had

not planned it at that particular moment. The contrast between this "entirely unintentionally" and the translation of the title of the final chapter as "Revenge with a Vengeance" could hardly be stronger; it requires us to believe only one of the options, and in his translation choices in the final chapter Bush opts for the latter, through the marking of agency, his treatment of transitivity and additional emphasis on the daughter's ownership of her emotions. In the Catalan, apart from the paragraph beginning "Ho confesso: va ser expressament que vaig deixar les persianes amunt i el llum obert. Va ser expressament que havia dit a l'oncle que jo ja dormiré a terra, si vols, no em fa res", we encounter far more ambivalence, both about the question of what kind of vengeance this is and about her cognitive and emotional response to the events. For instance, the chapter title in Catalan, "Una venjança en tota regla", has the effect of simultaneously marking the magnitude of her revenge and linking it to the normative and the expected: placing it in line with the patriarchal order of transmission presented in the introduction. Furthermore, in the examples below we find shifts between impersonal and personal forms that are not reflected in the translation.

> No era jo, era la seva manera de mirar-me…Era el seu desig el que confonia, el que feia estremir…
>
> It wasn't me, it was the way he looked at me… It was his desire that stunned me, that made me tremble…
>
> Vaig tornar-hi quan em va fer mal i el dolor no se sabia on s'acabava o on era que continuava amb el plaer.
>
> And I felt one again when he hurt me, and I couldn't decide where pain ended and pleasure began.

Remembering with Jill Bennett (2005) that "the experience of trauma paradigmatically encapsulates both direct, unmediated affective experience and an absence of affect, insofar as it is resistent to cognitive processing and induces 'psychic numbing'", would seem to confirm the presence of traumatic translation in this chapter. Furthermore, such a

reading adds to critical approaches which see the novel in terms of a pull between desire and duty, tradition and modernity, self and other: as a story of emancipation through language, but on a rational rather than affective level, as perceptively detected by Crameri (2013). Ultimately, as in the case of *La plaça del Diamant*, it is the translation that makes the original ambivalence more visible.

Finally, I would like to conclude with tentative comments on the presence of Rodoreda in the final chapter of *L'últim patriarca*, where the narrator feels the need to repeat twice that she was and is not Rodoreda, beckoning inevitable comparisons, given the context, with the latter's real-life sexual liaison with her uncle, and the beginnings of this in child sexual abuse, but also I think with the final chapter of *La plaça del Diamant*. Once more we are faced with the tension between the need to translate and the impossibility of translating trauma into language, in a context with which the concept of traumatic translation might be most associated, that of the necessity of self-translation in contexts of exile and migration. Unlike Javier Cercas's *El impostor*, El Hachmi's traumatic translation constructs a complex scenario of transgenerational transmission of memory of collective violence, one that calls for empathic recognition of the relationship between different narratives of cultural trauma, but which nevertheless resists absolute identification and assimilation.

WORKS CITED

Andreu-Besó, J. Vicente. 1999. "Linguistic and Cultural Insights in Two Translations of Mercè Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*". In *Voices and Visions: Words and Works of Mercè Rodoreda*, edited by Kathleen McNerney, 146–55. Selinsgrove and London: Susquehanna University Press and Associated University Presses.

Benjamin, Walter. 1923. "The Task of the Translator". In *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt, translated by Harry Zohn, 70–82. London: Fontana, 1992.

Bennett, Jill. 2005. *Empathic Vision: Affect, Trauma and Contemporary Art*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Berman, Antoine. 1985. "Translation and the Trials of the Foreign", translated by Lawrence Venuti. In *The Translation Studies Reader*, edited by Lawrence Venuti, 191–202. Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2012.

Blanco, Leticia. 2015. "Lolita en la piel de Colometa". *El Mundo*, 9 April.

Bush, Peter. 2013a. "Memory, War and Translation. Mercè Rodoreda's *In Diamond Square*". In *Perspectives on Literature and Translation: Creation, Circulation, Reception*, edited by Brian Nelson and Bridget Maher, 31–46. New York: Routledge.

———. 2013b. "On Translating *In Diamond Square*". Online. http://www.virago.co.uk/peter-bush-on-translating-in-diamond-square-by-merce-rodoreda/.

Caruth, Cathy. 1996. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Crameri, Kathryn. 2013. "Searching for Orgasms in the Dictionary: Language and Emotion in *L'últim patriarca* by Najat El Hachmi". Paper presented at the AHGBI conference, Oxford, March 25–27.

Culleton, Colleen. 2002. "Daedalus's Wings: The Effects of Temporal Distance in *La plaça del Diamant*". *Catalan Review* 16, 1/2: 103–19.

El Hachmi, Najat. 2008. *L'últim patriarca*. Barcelona: Planeta. Translated into English as *The Last Patriarch*, by Peter Bush. London: Serpent's Tail.

Felman, Shoshana, and Dori Laub. 1992. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. New York: Routledge.

Fernàndez, Josep-Anton. 1999. "The Angel of History and the Truth of Love: Mercè Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*". *The Modern Language Review* 94.1: 103–109.

Herman, Judith. 1992. *Trauma and Recovery*. New York: Basic Books.

Keown, Dominic. 2005. "No Time for the Doves? Intrusion and Redrafting in the English Translation of *La plaça del Diamant*". *Modern Language Review* 100.3: 659–72.

LaCapra, Dominick. 2001. *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.

Langer, Lawrence. 1993. *Holocaust Testimonies: The Ruins of Memory*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Marín-Dòmine, Marta. 2003. "At First Sight: Paratextual Elements in the English Translations of *La plaça del Diamant*". *Cadernos de Tradução* 1, 11: 127–40.

Miguélez Carballeira, Helena. 2003. "Language and Characterization in Mercè Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*: Towards a Third Translation into English". *The Translator* 9.1: 101–24.

Parker, Jan, and Timothy Mathews. 2011. *Tradition, Translation, Trauma: The Classic and the Modern*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Resina, Joan Ramon. 1987. "The Link in Consciousness: Time and Community in Rodoreda's *La plaça del Diamant*". *Catalan Review* 2.2: 225–46.

Resina, Joan Ramon. 2008. *Barcelona's Vocation of Modernity: Rise and Decline of an Urban Image*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Richards, Michael. 2013. *After the Civil War: Making Memory and Re-Making Spain since 1936*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Rodoreda, Mercè. 1962. *La plaça del* Diamant. Barcelona: Club Editor. Translated as *The Pigeon Girl*, trans. Eda O'Shiel, London: André Deutsch, 1967; *The Time of the Doves*, trans. David H. Rosenthal, New York: Taplinger, 1981 (reissued in paperback by Graywolf Press, 1986); *In Diamond Square*, trans. Peter Bush, London: Virago, 2013.

Short, Kanyann, 1995. "Too Disconnected / Too Bound Up: The Paradox of Identity in Mercè Rodoreda's *The Time of the Doves*". In *International Women's Writing: New Landscapes of Identity*, edited by Anne E. Brown and Marjanne E. Goozé, 187–95. Westport: Greenwood.

Silverman, Kaja. 1996. *The Threshold of the Visible World*. London and New York: Routledge.

Tal, Kali. 1996. *Worlds of Hurt: Reading the Literatures of Trauma*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ugarte, Michael. 1999. "Working at a Discount: Class Consciousness in *La plaça del Diamant*", *Modern Language Notes* 114.2: 297–314.

Winter, Ulrich. 2005. "Localizar a los muertos y reconocer el otro: Lugares de memoria en la cultura española contemporánea". In *Casa encantada: Lugares de memoria en la España constitucional*, edited by Joan Ramon Resina and Ulrich Winter, 17–40. Madrid: Iberoamericana; Frankfurt: Vervuert.