THE PERILS OF TRANSLATION:
The Representation of Australian Cultural Identity
in the French Translations of Crime Fiction Novels
by
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The recognition by translation theorists that literary translation has the ability
to perform a culture for a target readership has led to intense debate surrounding the
difficulties posed by the translation of cultural specificity. This is now referred to as
“the cultural turn in Translation Studies”. Theorists supporting a “foreignisation”
strategy in translation argue that this facilitates understanding of the source culture
by highlighting cultural difference. The staging of difference thus paradoxically
serves to draw cultures closer together. Theorists supporting a “domestication”
strategy, however, suggest that the goal should be to create equivalence – adapting
the source text to provide understanding for the target culture by neutralising,
naturalising or even eliminating cultural difference. In order to explore the
ramifications of the strategies adopted by translators, this project will undertake a
comparative textual analysis of four crime fiction novels by two Australian authors,
Richard Flanagan and Philip McLaren, in which both authors have consciously set
out to construct a distinctive sense of Australian cultural identity. The micro-textual
analysis of the original texts and their translations aims to identify the ways in which
peculiarly Australian features of these novels are conveyed to the French target
readership. This will allow conclusions to be drawn on the influence that translation
practices can have on the intercultural transcreation that takes place in the
transportation of texts between cultures.

The emergence of two other phenomena during the same period as the
“cultural turn” in Translation Studies provides further scaffolding for this case study.
First, there has been a renewed focus in the last thirty years or so on representations
of Australian identity in the nation’s cultural productions and this has increased the
visibility of that identity on the world stage. Secondly, there has been a growing
acceptance by scholars that crime fiction narratives serve as a vehicle for authors to
portray a sense of “self-identification”, while also offering a means for informing readers from other cultures about a particular cultural identity in a specific place and at a specific time. The longstanding respect that has been given to the genre of crime fiction by French readers and the notable increase in the production of this genre in Australia in the last thirty years have led to large numbers of “home-grown” narratives being selected for translation and publication in France. If reading crime fiction texts can become a way of viewing representations of Australian cultural identity, then the substantial case study proposed here will highlight the potential perils inherent in the process of “translating” that identity into the realms of the Francophone world.
DECLARATION

I certify that this work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in my name in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. In addition, I certify that no part of this work will, in the future, be used in a submission in my name for any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution without the prior approval of the University of Adelaide and where applicable, any partner institution responsible for the joint award of this degree.

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ABBREVIATIONS


