

THE PERILS OF TRANSLATION:
The Representation of Australian Cultural Identity
in the French Translations of Crime Fiction Novels
by
Richard Flanagan and Philip McLaren

Sarah Margaret Anne Reed

Submitted in total fulfilment of the requirements
of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

October 2015

Department of French Studies
School of Humanities
The University of Adelaide

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	5
Declaration.....	7
Acknowledgments	9
Abbreviations.....	11

INTRODUCTION.....	13
--------------------------	-----------

PART I

CHAPTER 1: AUSTRALIAN CULTURAL IDENTITY	37
Culture and Cultural Identity.....	37
Australian Cultural Identity.....	42
Translating Australian Cultural Identity.....	47

CHAPTER 2: THE FORTUNES OF AUSTRALIAN CRIME FICTION IN FRANCE.....	53
---	-----------

CHAPTER 3: RICHARD FLANAGAN AND PHILIP MCLAREN: “AUSTRALIAN AUTHORS”	71
Richard Flanagan.....	72
Philip McLaren.....	81

PART II

COMPARATIVE TEXTUAL ANALYSIS	97
Approaches to Translation	97

CHAPTER 4: TRANSLATING THE PARATEXT	103
Titles and Front Cover Art	106
Back Cover Blurbs	114
Prefaces, Prologues and Acknowledgments.....	116
Textual Shifts and Footnotes.....	119

CHAPTER 5: TRANSLATING PLACE	127
Philip McLaren’s Outback	132
Richard Flanagan’s Tasmania	146
Richard Flanagan’s Sydney.....	161

CHAPTER 6: TRANSLATING BEHAVIOURS	171
Culinary Practices	172
Dress Codes.....	184
Equality and Mateship in a “Classless” Society	194
Aboriginal Cultural Practices.....	204
CHAPTER 7: TRANSLATING LANGUAGE	213
Vulgarity and Irreverence	216
Designating Ethnicity.....	223
Varieties of Australian English	232
Australianisms: Diminutives and Metaphorical Language.....	242
CONCLUSION	261
APPENDICES	275
Appendix A: Australian Crime Fiction Titles Published in French Translation 1980-2014	277
Appendix B: Book Front Cover Images and Back Cover Blurbs	287
Appendix C: Transcript of French Advertisement for Richard Flanagan’s <i>La Fureur et l’Ennui</i> (2008).....	295
BIBLIOGRAPHY	297

ABSTRACT

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.

I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

I also give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University's digital research repository, the Library Search and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

Signature:

X

Sarah Margaret Anne Reed
Doctoral Candidate

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish profoundly to thank my supervisors, John West-Sooby and Jean Fornasiero, for their unwavering support and inexhaustible willingness to share knowledge and wisdom with me during the course of this project. A particular thanks to John, whose maddening but invaluable and impressive attention to detail succeeded finally, I hope, in steering me towards a more comprehensible and much improved manner of writing. I feel extremely honoured to have received such careful guidance from you both while negotiating my way through the multitude of distractions and “déviation” in this topic, to achieve something I thought was entirely possible – but mostly in my dreams. Thank you, John and Jean.

I would also like to thank Deborah Walker-Morrison from the University of Auckland whose passion for this subject in my undergraduate years – a time when I still had trouble pronouncing “specificité” – was the undeniable catalyst that set me off on this journey. Thank you, Deborah.

My thanks also go to Richard Flanagan who was gracious in granting me some of his precious time so that I could gain insights into the life, work and challenges of an author.

Scholarship funding from the University of Adelaide in the form of an Australian Research Council Scholarship is gratefully acknowledged. I was also the fortunate recipient of the P.W. Rice Travel Scholarship from the University of Adelaide which enabled me to travel to France for a period of three months to undertake research for this project.

Finally my thanks go to my family and friends, and particularly to my three children, Matthew, Jeremy and Rebekah. Thank you all for your constant encouragement when it got tough, your bottomless cups of tea and your never-ending faith, optimism and love. Matt, Jem and Bekah – you inspire me every day and I am so proud to be your mum.

ABBREVIATIONS

- DRG* Richard Flanagan, *Death of a River Guide* (London: Atlantic Books, 2004).
- ACC* Richard Flanagan, *À contre-courant*, Trans. Johan-Frédéric Hel Guedj (Paris : Éditions 10/18, *domaine étranger*, 2008)
- SBM* Philip McLaren, *Scream Black Murder* (Broome, WA: Magabala Books, 2001).
- TA* Philip McLaren, *Tueur d'aborigènes: Une enquête de la brigade aborigène*, Trans. François Thomazeau (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, *folio policier*, 2005).
- UT* Richard Flanagan, *The Unknown Terrorist* (London: Atlantic Books, 2008).
- FE* Richard Flanagan, *La Fureur et l'Ennui*, Trans. Renaud Morin (Paris : Éditions 10/18, *domaine policier*, 2010).
- MIU* Philip McLaren, *Murder in Utopia* (Alexandria, NSW: Cockatoo Books, 2009).
- U* Philip McLaren, *Utopia*, Trans. Philippe Boisserand (Nouméa, NC: Éditions Traversées, 2007).