Prologue: Translation Studies

Although translating is an ancient practice, it has been formally and systematically studied in a non-evaluative way for less than thirty years. In 1978, while the publication of addresses made at a symposium on literature and translation was being prepared, André Lefevere, a noted expert in translation, proposed to adopt the expression Translation Studies to refer to the discipline pertaining to the issues of the production and description of translations. However, this does not mean that the discipline did not exist before this date. In fact, the theoretical considerations unified under the expression Translation Studies in 1978 existed before but were not linked by a unifying term. Moreover, this does not mean that theories did not exist or that the end products of this practice were not analyzed; they were, but in two restrictive perspectives: pedagogic and evaluative. Translation was indeed almost exclusively considered to be a tool to learn a foreign language and translations were thus analyzed to assess whether they were “good” translations, faithful to the original. In the 1970s, the developing perspective of Translation Studies was opposed to this normative reasoning. It aimed to abandon this qualitative evaluation model and to focus on the production of systematic analyses of translations so as to explore the methods used by translators during the act of translation. In 1985, the publication of articles compiled by Theo Hermans under the title, *The Manipulation of Literature*, pushed further the definition of this budding field of research. The authors showed that translation was a form of re-writing and that it was therefore a process of literary manipulation. Their motivation for research
sought to determine what happens when a translator engages in the act of translation, when s/he replaces “textual material in one language by equivalent material in another language” \(^2\), and to assess the nature of the existing manipulation.

The goal of this paper is to analyze how translators translate and thus, like the contributors to Hermans’ collection, assess the nature of translators’ manipulation. Indeed, by producing a comparative analysis of two French translations of James Joyce’s short story “The Dead”, I hope to discover trends in the act of translation. This practice is complex and encompasses a multitude of linguistic and extra-linguistic features. It therefore seems appropriate to focus on only one of them. Although translating is primarily a linguistic act, I will concentrate on an extra-linguistic feature of translation: the cultural dimension of this practice. The refined aim of this research is therefore to show how translators react to the cultural elements present in the source text, the material they have to translate, and how they convey their meanings into the target text, the translation itself. It will thus prove useful to compare how two French translators translated the Irish culture-specific items (CSIs), such as place names, historical references or idioms, of Joyce’s text, and to determine what their translation choices imply. On a technical level, I will try to determine which translating tools are used and how they reconstitute the cultural notion of the source text in the target text. On a semantic level, I will examine the degree of comprehension conveyed to the reader of the translation. Finally, on a strategic level, I will assess whether the translators’ choices are systematic within each of their texts. These are the three areas which motivate this comparative analysis. In short, “How is culture translated in practice?” or “Is culture translatable?”
Source and Target Texts

It is important to consider who wrote the source text, who translated it, and how to best proceed before going on to translation theories pertaining to CSIs and the comparative analysis itself. Three texts constitute the corpus necessary for this study:

- “The Dead”: Joyce’s short story published in 1914.

_Dubliners_ deals with Dublin life in the 1900s and with human fate in general. “The Dead” is the last short story of this collection. It has often been interpreted as a tribute to Dublin and to Irish hospitality as the action takes place during a lively Christmas party. However, the story has a darker side to it as its main protagonist, Gabriel, tries to come to terms with his demons, mainly identity, love, and jealousy. This textual material has been chosen for its relatively short length which will make it possible to focus on telling examples, and for Joyce’s writing style that assumes familiarity with his subject, creating an abundance of CSIs. Thus, I focus on the short story as raw material for research on the act of translation but not in order to analyze it as a literary or cultural representation along the lines of Joyce Studies.

Attention to certain biographical details shows that the two translators are individuals with different motivations. The fact that the translations were produced nearly fifty years apart is not the only contextual feature that differentiates them. Aubert’s professional career is closely linked to Joyce’s œuvre. He not only translated _Dubliners_ but also published many critical studies of Joyce’s writing such as _Introduction à l’esthétique de James Joyce_ and _Joyce avec Lacan_. In 2004, Aubert also published a new French translation of _Ulysses_. It becomes apparent that this target text is the work of a literature scholar specializing in Joyce’s texts. Fernandez is _Dubliners_’ first French translator³. Her motivations differ greatly from Aubert’s. She was a friend of the
Joyce family while they were living in Paris. She was a dancer, choreographer, and pianist. Fernandez was quite famous in Paris, her translation is therefore the work of a 1920s Parisian artist who translated the short story as a friend of the author. These biographical elements show that neither translator is a professional translator. Aubert was translating as a literary specialist in 1974, whereas Fernandez was translating as an amateur in 1926. This variation in background and motivations will most likely yield different translation results.

The aim of the comparative analysis is to study the choices two translators, facing an identical source text, made in regard to CSIs. Thanks to this comparative work, it will be possible to outline the strategies adopted by translators in the translating process. I will thus begin with an empirical study (the descriptive comparison of extracts from the source and target texts), which will lead to conclusions about the translators’ reactions to CSIs. My ultimate goal is therefore to verify whether there is coincidence between translation theories pertaining to CSIs and the actual practice of translators, as demonstrated by Aubert and Fernandez. The translations are considered here as a means to identify the strategies adopted by two translators so as to produce results that mirror their actual translating practice. By no means am I trying to accomplish the impossible task of determining which translation is the “best”. Indeed, I will analyze the translators’ choices, not the actual qualitative value of these choices.

As shown earlier, such a project relates to the relatively young research field known as Translation Studies. James Holmes was one of the first researchers who attempted to define and organize this discipline. According to him, Translation Studies can be divided into three branches: descriptive, theoretical and applied. My research is motivated by the reasoning underlying Descriptive Translation Studies whereby data collected during the empirical studies of translations allow researchers to articulate theoretical speculations relating to the work of translators. The descriptive branch hence feeds the theoretical branch. By analyzing translations,
it is therefore possible both to revise existing theories and devise new ones. Today, Gideon Toury, a prominent researcher in the field of Descriptive Translation Studies, insists that descriptive studies of translations should be based on the assumption that equivalence exists between the source and the target texts. According to him, what remains to be established is how this equivalence is realized in the relationship uniting the translation to its original. Key to research in translation studies is therefore clarifying the link between source and target. I will first discuss the translation theories dealing with CSIs, however, so as to give a sound basis for the descriptive comparison.

**Culture and Translation Theories**

The CSIs of a source text constitute a connotative semantic variable which the translator cannot ignore. To demonstrate this idea, it is imperative to clarify the concept of culture and to agree on a definition that will guide the comparative analysis. The definition of the concept given by Ward Goodenough can be used as a starting point:

A society’s culture consists of whatever it is one has to know or believe in order to operate in a manner acceptable to its members, and do so in any role that they accept for any one of themselves. Culture, being what people have to learn as distinct from their biological heritage, must consist of the end product of learning: knowledge, in a most general, if relative sense of the term. By this definition, we should note that culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behavior, or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the forms of things that people have in mind, their model for perceiving, relating and otherwise interpreting them.

An individual’s cultural identity is therefore made up of all the things s/he has learned since birth so as to function in her/his social environment in an optimum way. At first, the notion of cultural identity seems to involve a certain homogeneity and unity. However, a given individual possesses a multitude of social identities. S/he can, for instance, belong simultaneously to a nation, an ethnicity, a gender, a social class, a socio-professional category, a geographical region and an age
group. Admitting that an individual possesses a multitude of social identities means admitting that her/his cultural identity is multiple too. Since individuals belong simultaneously to distinct social groups, they operate on several cultural levels.

To link this with Joyce’s short story, it is possible to spot these different levels in Gabriel, the male protagonist. He is a man, he is Irish, he is Catholic, and he is opposed to the nationalist movement. As Lance Hewson and Jacky Martin underline, culture is not a static entity: “‘culture’ is not some homogenous and eternal truth, but a specific collection of features which have to be minutely examined in each translation situation”⁸. An individual’s culture is thus multiple and perpetually changing as s/he joins or leaves a given social group. Culture is therefore a dynamic and hybrid system. This characteristic of culture has important consequences for the act of translation. Indeed, languages are emanations of cultures, and translations are hence a meeting point between languages and cultures. As Mary Snell-Hornby states: “If language is an integral part of culture, the translator needs not only proficiency in two languages, he must also be at home in two cultures. In other words, he must be bilingual and bicultural”⁹, ¹⁰. The cultural aspect of translation cannot be understated.

The main challenge in translation is to manage to convey in the target text the cultural connotations pertaining to the language and to the source text being translated. It is unlikely that two concepts or two representations would coincide from one language to the other. For example, biblical translators have been faced with the dilemma of wondering how to translate “lamb” in a culture where the term does not connote innocence, or, even worse, where the animal does not exist¹¹. It seems that the risk of not conveying the source message in its totality when dealing with CSIs is high and that entropy, a loss of information, might often occur. Translating is not a simple linguistic transposing operation, and it is thus vital to take into account the extra-linguistic cultural factor.
When dealing with the cultural aspect of translation, it is difficult to agree on what should be designated as CSIs. Often, researchers avoid defining them and disagree on the terminology, using vague expressions such as “cultural reference” or “sociocultural term”. This lack of precision is quite disconcerting, and it is essential to agree on a definition that may guide the comparative analysis. These items belong to a particular culture, they refer to cultural identities which do not have direct equivalents in another culture. For instance, references to the institutions, history, toponymy, or art of a given culture are CSIs. Cultural connotative references represented linguistically in a source text constitute a translation conflict because there are no concepts covering the exact same field of definition in the target culture. This is when a CSI appears in translation. Indeed, according to Javier Franco Aixelá, CSIs are:

Those textually actualized items whose function and connotation in a source text involve a translation problem in their transference to a target text, whenever this problem is a product of the nonexistence of the referred item or of its different intertextual status in the cultural system of the readers of the target text.  

These clarifications on the concept of culture and its impact on translations prove that translating culture is a complex process. Researchers such as Michel Ballard have shown that there are two strategic leanings when dealing with these CSIs. He wonders how a French translator should translate a text describing English workers drinking tea. Should the translator switch to coffee, wine or beer because in France the reference to tea would be inappropriate in this situation? Or, should s/he keep the source item? Translators are in a dilemma; they have conflicting options when dealing with a CSI: retaining it in the target text (choosing “thé”), replacing it (switching to “café”) or simply not translating it.

The translation of culture demands that translators make a choice between conservation and replacement of the item. Researchers in Translation Studies usually promote one of the two
strategies, using different but semantically approaching terminologies. Holmes uses the terms “naturalizing” and “exoticizing”\textsuperscript{14}, Aixelá writes about “naturalization” and “conservation”\textsuperscript{15}, while Lawrence Venuti coined the terms “domestication” and “foreignization”\textsuperscript{16}. Venuti’s research and its implications are of particular relevance to this study. He believes that domestication consists in erasing the references that could be culturally foreign to the target readership. This strategy therefore implies the disappearance of the cultural concepts pertaining to the source language which do not exist in the target culture. In the domestication process, translators decide to replace CSIs by target items that they believe are equivalent to the source items. Advocates of domestication argue that this strategy makes for a better level of comprehension for the target readership. Indeed, in A Textbook of Translation, Paul Newmark stresses that “transference ... blocks comprehension, it emphasizes the culture and excludes the message”\textsuperscript{17}. In domestication, optimum comprehension is vital and the target readership should not be hindered by the foreign aspects of the text. In fact, the goal of its promoters is to give the impression that the target text is not a translation but an original. Evidence of any translation activity must therefore disappear so as to provide an unambiguous target text. The main translating tools used in domestication, equivalence or non-translation, imply either the replacement of the CSI by a so-called equivalent target item, or the obliteration of the item.

Venuti strongly opposes this theoretical discourse. He deplores this strategy which, according to him, makes the translator totally invisible and favors the creation of a clear and transparent style aiming at minimizing the foreign aspects of the source text. Foreignization, on the other hand, consists in accepting the cultural difference and in reproducing the cultural specificity in the target text. Venuti defines foreignization as “an ethnodeviant pressure ... to register the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad”\textsuperscript{18}. What matters here is the source text, not an elusive optimum level of comprehension.
Foreignization aims to convey the cultural and linguistic nuances of the source text by using “resistant” tools such as calque, loan word, or literal translation, which adhere to the text and favor the conservation of its cultural specificity. Of course, the main argument against foreignization is the creation of a potential lack of comprehension for the target readership. This is the reason why foreignization tools are sometimes accompanied by explanation devices such as the extra-textual translator’s note.

These two strategies show conflicting definitions of what translations are meant to achieve and opposing visions of the role of target texts in target cultures. Translators must choose between “sending the reader abroad” and adapting the CSI to the target cultural environment. Whether translators should go for domestication or foreignization is an open debate. It will thus be most instructive to assess in practice, during the descriptive comparative analysis, when and how translators use these strategies.

These theoretical clarifications about culture and translation help to redefine the aim of the analysis which is comparing how the two translators translated the CSIs of the source text. From this perspective, Joyce’s short story is an excellent source because CSIs abound. My study also attempts to determine whether the translators’ choices are systematic. For instance, if a translator decides to borrow a CSI once, will s/he do so for all similar items? It is also necessary to assess what degree of entropy, on a semantic level, is implied by the translators’ choices. Finally, we must analyze whether the translators’ strategic choices relate to domestication or foreignization and the implications of such choices.

**Descriptive Comparative Analysis**

The methodology used for this descriptive comparative analysis consists in creating a corpus of significant CSIs examples taken from the source and target texts. Every source item is
compared to its two target equivalents, which are, in turn, compared to each other. This comparative work helps to isolate translating trends. The observations on the act of translation thus collected are then contrasted with the translation theories previously discussed. Ultimately, these theories are revised in the light of the actual practice of translators demonstrated by a descriptive comparative analysis. Quotations from “The Dead”, Aubert’s translation, and Fernandez’s translation are illustrated in the following table.

**Table 1: Significant CSI Examples and their French Translations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Joyce’s “The Dead” 1914</th>
<th>Aubert’s Translation 1974</th>
<th>Fernandez’s Translation 1926</th>
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| Then he took from his waistcoat pocket a little paper and glanced at the headings he had made for his speech. He was undecided about the lines from Robert Browning for he feared they would be above the heads of his hearers. Some quotation that they would recognize from Shakespeare or from the Melodies would be better. | Puis il prit dans sa poche de gilet un petit bout de papier et jeta un coup d’œil aux rubriques qu’il avait préparées pour son discours. Il était indécis quant aux vers de Robert Browning car il craignait qu’ils ne passent au-dessus de la tête de ses auditeurs. Mieux vaudrait une citation qu’ils pussent identifier tirée, de Shakespeare ou des Mélodies.  
| - O, innocent Amy! I have found out that you write for the *Daily Express*. Now aren’t you ashamed of yourself?  
- Why should I be ashamed of myself? Asked Gabriel, blinking his eyes and trying to smile.  
- Well, I’m ashamed of you, said Miss Ivors frankly. To say that you’d write fro a rag like that. I didn’t think you were a West Briton ... When they were together again she spoke of the University question and Gabriel felt more at ease. | - Oh, innocent Amy! J’ai découvert que vous écrivez pour le *Daily Express*. Alors, vous n’avez pas honte?  
- Pourquoi aurais-je honte? Demanda Gabriel, clignant les yeux et s’efforçant de sourire.  
- Eh bien moi, j’ai honte de vous, dit Miss Ivors avec franchise. Dire que vous écrivez pour un pareil torchon. Je ne pensais pas que vous étiez un Anglais ... Lorsqu’ils furent ensemble à nouveau, elle lui parla de la question universitaire et Gabriel se sentit plus à l’aise. | - Oh! sainte nitouche! J’ai découvert que vous écrivez pour le *Daily Express*. N’avez-vous pas honte de vous même?  
- Pourquoi aurais-je honte? Demanda Gabriel clignant des yeux et s’efforçant de sourire.  
- Eh bien! moi, j’ai honte de vous, dit carrément Miss Ivors. Dire que vous écrivez pour un journal pareil! Je ne croyais pas que vous étiez un Anglais ... Lorsqu’ils se retrouvèrent seuls de nouveau, elle parla de la question universitaire et Gabriel se sentit plus à son aise. |
Gabriel’s warm trembling fingers tapped the cold pane of the window. How cool it must be outside! How pleasant it would be to walk out alone, first along by the river and then through the park.\textsuperscript{22}

- *Beannacht lìbh*, cried Miss Ivors, with a laugh, as she ran down the staircase.\textsuperscript{23}

The lamps were still burning redly in the murky air, and across the river, the palace of the Four Courts stood out menacingly against the heavy sky.\textsuperscript{24}

As the cab drove across O’Connell Bridge Miss O’Callaghan said:
- They say you never cross O’Connell Bridge without seeing a white horse.
- I see a white man this time, said Gabriel.
- Where? Asked Mr Bartell D’Arcy. Gabriel pointed to the statue, on which lay patches of snow. Then he nodded familiarly to it and waved his hand.
- Good-night, Dan, he said gaily.\textsuperscript{25}

After looking at some significant CSI occurrences and their translations into French, it is obvious that the translators often make different choices which convey varying levels of comprehension for the target readership. Both translators decided that the CSI “Melodies” needed to be accompanied by some extra explanation. Aubert used a translator’s note to explain this item whereas Fernandez added an intratextual explanation, “de Thomas Moore”, to clarify the reference. These two translating tools produce two levels of comprehension: Aubert offers a complete view of what *The Melodies* are (date, author, subject, and relevance to “The Dead”)...
whereas Fernandez adds only the name of the author. Although these two choices produce different levels of comprehension, they are similar on a strategic level. Indeed, both translators considered that this item required an explanation. This is the only occurrence, out of the selected examples, where they agree that extra information is needed. In other cases, the translators react differently to the CSIs and seem to decide to add information when they personally feel it is needed. For instance, while Aubert simply borrows the term “O’Connell Bridge”, Fernandez translates it as “le pont O’Connell”. It seems that Fernandez believed borrowing the term would alter the reader’s comprehension and she consequently went for “pont” rather than “bridge”. However, in another instance, Fernandez completely mystifies the reader. She borrows the Gaelic expression “Beannacht libh” without adding any extra information to explain the meaning of this idiom. The level of comprehension conveyed to the target readership here is virtually nonexistent. The reader of the translation must be left to wonder what language this is and what it means. Aubert’s translation contrasts greatly with hers as he chooses to use a translator’s note explaining the meaning of the CSI. The implications of these choices for the readership are opposed: Fernandez’s reader will be mystified whereas Aubert’s will be provided with the information s/he needs to understand the CSI. This leads me to a first general observation on the act of translation: translators add dissimilar information at different places, thus conveying varying levels of restitution of the original message.

Notice the instances where both translators agree that no extra information is needed. Neither translator felt the CSIs “Robert Browning”, “Daily Express”, “University question”, “the river”, “the park”, “the statue”, or “Dan” required extra explanation for the target readership. Both translators either borrowed these items or used literal translation. These choices are quite surprising because they convey a low level of restitution of the source message for the target readership. Unless her/his personal curiosity pushes her/him to research what the “University
question” is, the reader of the translation will not understand this historic reference. This is unfortunate because most of the characters present at the Christmas party in the short story are Catholics and their reference to the “University question” is quite significant. During the timeframe of the short story, Ireland was still under British ruling. Catholics could not receive degrees from Dublin’s main university, Trinity College, unless they converted. By failing to convey this in the target text, a vital contextual meaning is lost and the level of entropy is at its highest. That the references to Robert Browning and the *Daily Express* are not clarified either is all the more surprising as both translators felt the item “Melodies”, which is quite similar to these other items, required extra information. Joyce also refers to numerous Dublin landmarks in this short story. An Irish reader would know that “the park” refers to Phoenix Park, “the river” to the Liffey and “the statue” to Daniel O’Connell’s statue. The translations provided by Aubert and Fernandez: “le fleuve”, “la rivière”, “le parc”, “la statue”, “Dan” and “Daniel”, fail to convey the Irish specificity of each term. Not only does the target reader fail to understand that the “white man” is O’Connell’s statue covered in snow but s/he also fails to understand that Gabriel informally addresses the statue itself: “Good-night, Dan”. In the French translations, the target reader is left to wonder who this Dan (or Daniel in Fernandez’s case) is, thinking he might be a new character in the story.

The motivation for a translator to add extra information is unclear. Why did Aubert use a translator’s note for the CSI “Melodies” and not for the “University question”? Why did Fernandez borrow the Gaelic idiom without attempting to explain its meaning? These varying translation choices might be explained by the personal motivations of the two translators. As a literature scholar specializing in Joyce, Aubert seems to be in favor of explaining specifically Irish CSIs ("Melodies”, “Beannacht libh” and “Four Courts”) whereas as an amateur, Fernandez seems to be mainly guided by her intuition. It seems therefore that translators do not follow
theoretical considerations but rather personal ones when they decide whether or not they need to clarify a CSI.

The second observation of this comparative analysis is the fact that translators vacillate over the use of domestication or foreignization tools. It seems that during the translation process translators are influenced by both domestication and foreignization strategies. This sometimes leads them to make conflicting translation choices. For instance, Fernandez borrows the title “Miss” but uses “M.”, the French abbreviation of Monsieur, rather than retaining the “Mr.” which would have made her translation strategy consistent. Similarly, after choosing an extremely foreignizing strategy when borrowing “Beannacht libh”, she chooses a domestication tool called equivalence when translating “the palace of the Four Courts”. She completely erases the Dublin specificity of the source text by solely conveying the functional aspect of the CSI: “le palais de justice”. Aubert oscillates between domestication and foreignization too. He favors foreignization when he borrows the expression “innocent Amy” and then domestication when he adapts the CSI “West Briton” by transposing it to a French perspective: “Angliche”. It appears that translators do not favor one strategy over the other. Initially, it seemed that a translator would chose to use either a strategy of foreignization or a strategy of domestication, but it is not the case in practice. A translator’s strategic position is therefore not globally pragmatic but occurrence-based.

Although the translators’ position between domestication and foreignization changes constantly, it is clear that the tool they use the most is a foreignizing tool called borrowing. In general, translators seem to try to retain the cultural specificity of the source text (“innocent Amy”, “Beannacht libh”, “Four Courts”, “O’Connell Bridge”, “Daily Express”, “Dan”) even though it often implies a high level of entropy. The examples quoted above show that borrowings have the advantage of rooting the target text in the source culture by introducing a touch of local color. Unfortunately, as with Fernandez’s borrowing of “Beannacht libh”, translators risk
mystifying the target reader by presenting obscure textual elements which are sometimes difficult to understand. For instance, when Aubert borrows the idiom “innocent Amy” without adding any extra information, the reader is lost, wondering here, as with “Dan”, if Amy is a new character in the short story. Borrowing a CSI hence implies a potentially high level of entropy when one compares the target message to the source readership’s likely understanding of the CSI in question. Used on its own, borrowing diminishes the understanding of source cultural meanings and connotations. Optimum comprehension and raw conservation of a CSI are therefore generally not compatible. However, when a borrowing is accompanied by an explaining tool (note or intratextual explanation), it appears that comprehension and conservation can work together.

Based on this study, we can conclude that translators’ choices and strategies are not systematic or consistent. Fernandez uses different tools (borrowing, then equivalence) to translate similar types of CSIs. Aubert uses a translator’s note for “Four Courts”, “Beannacht libh”, and “Melodies”, but not for the “University question”. When choosing a strategy, when choosing a translation tool or when deciding whether to add extra information or not, translators vacillate over a multitude of options. They do not adopt a unifying strategy (domestication or foreignization) nor do they use tools in a given translation situation consistently. The strategic choices seem to be made one by one, each time a CSI appears, rather than in a systematic, consistent and organized way.

Lost in Translation?

This descriptive comparative analysis of two translations shows how challenging the translation of CSIs is for translators. It remains unclear what level of comprehension of the source CSI is conveyed to the target readership. Not only do the translations of CSIs remain vague but also the implicit connotations associated with these terms are often not introduced in
the target text. To answer the question I asked in the introduction, “Is culture translatable?”, it seems not, or only sometimes. The two translators managed to find translation solutions that partially convey the source cultural message in the target text in some cases. However, on a whole, the translation of CSIs is rarely satisfying because of the level of entropy it implies. Is it utterly elusive to aim at carrying the source CSIs and their connotations in the target text? I would like to argue that it would not be if adding extra-textual information, such as the translator’s note, was not seen so negatively in the literary world. Some argue that the translator is not the author and that he therefore should not interfere with the text by adding information that was not originally in the source text. Others believe such a view leaves the translator powerless, without any authority on the source text which is his raw material for creation, and therefore call for a wider use of notes so as to improve the target readership’s comprehension.

The status of the translator is slowly improving as it seems he is moving from the invisibility described by Venuti to a gradual public recognition. It is quite common to find a translator’s preface at the beginning of a translated work nowadays. Unfortunately, it seems that the act of translation will remain particularly frustrating if it is expected of translators to create an optimum level of comprehension without relying on extra-textual tools. Moreover, what this study has shown is that translators are individuals guided mostly by their intuition and personal motivations rather than by the theoretical considerations of Translation Studies researchers. There is therefore a large gap between the theories pertaining to the translation of culture in literature and the actual practice of translators. This gap is the result of a failure to identify the many challenges (linguistic, cultural but also ideological) that make every translation situation unique.
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6 Gideon TOURY, Descriptive Translation Studies and Beyond, Amsterdam, John Benjamins, 1995, p. 10.
Following the argument that a culture is a dynamic and hybrid system, it would be possible to argue here that being “bicultural” would not suffice, and that translators need to have the ability to interpret CSIs from a “multicultural” angle, that is “to be at home” in several, not just two, cultures.


Although Fernandez used “lilt” instead of “libh”, I consider this to be an instance of borrowing. This spelling mistake must be a publishing typo.

It is fair to argue here that, although s/he would be reading in the source language, an American, Australian, or South African reader would also fail to fully grasp these Irish CSIs. Annotated editions of literary works exist to compensate this lack of common cultural conceptual background within a given source language. Should translators aim at simply translating the source text without adding any information or should they aim at producing some kind of translated annotated text? This is quite a problematic question whose answer surely depends on the aims of the translation in the target culture, and which needs more researching. In any case, this shows that it is indeed the cultural aspect of literary texts that creates a potential incomprehension.