

# Cultural Errors in Spanish Translations of Marina Carr's

## *By the Bog of Cats...*

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*By the Bog of Cats...* (1999), a play by Marina Carr, portrays the afflicted life of Hester Swane, an Irish Traveller who is mistreated, discarded, and ultimately pushed to insanity because of betrayal, social isolation, and emotional distress. This play offers a profound exploration of Irish Travellers' cultural identity and marginalisation among the settled community. This study explores the cultural errors in two Spanish translations of this play. To this end, I conduct a comparative analysis between Carr's source text (ST) and the target texts (TT): *Junto a la Ci énaga de los Gatos* (2022q) by Melania Terrazas Gallego and Álvaro Mart ínez de la Puente Molina, which is the first complete translation of Carr's play, and Patricia Novillo-Corvalán's partial translation included in *The Theatre of Marina Carr: A Latin American Reading, Interview, and Translation* (2009). Until now, there has been no comparative analysis of the Spanish translations of *By the Bog of Cats...*, with a particular emphasis on cultural errors. The objectives of this analysis are to identify and categorise these errors. By analysing both texts, I aim to uncover the nature of the errors, their possible causes, and their impact on the final translations. Additionally, the two Spanish translations are compared to examine their linguistic and cultural similarities and differences. This comparative approach highlights key translation discrepancies in them, such as misrepresentation, omission, or over-domestication of cultural elements. The analysis also provides an overview of how cultural elements are represented in the translations and the implications of the translators' choices on the translated texts. Finally, the study sheds light on the translation strategies employed by the translators and their role in cross-cultural mediation.

**Keywords:** cultural errors, Spanish translations, comparative analysis, Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats...*, Irish Travellers, Irish Theatre

### Introduction

The current study examines potential cultural errors in two Spanish translations of Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats...* (1999). Marina Carr is an Irish writer who studied English and Philosophy at University College Dublin and is now one of Ireland's most renowned playwrights. She has received numerous awards throughout her career. To highlight a few: *The Mai* (1994) won the Dublin Theatre Festival's Best New Irish Play award (1994-1995), and *Portia Coughlan* (1996) earned the 19th Susan Smith Blackburn Prize (1996-1997). These two plays, alongside *By the Bog of Cats...* are widely regarded as *The Midlands Trilogy* (Carr, 1999). These plays feature a tragic female protagonist shaped by loss, family legacy, and profound pain, as well as a deep connection to the Irish Midlands landscapes.

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*By the Bog of Cats...* has often been compared to Euripides' *Medea* (431 BC). For example, Kramer (2018) in her Master's thesis conducts a comparative analysis of maternal deviance across Euripides' original, Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats...*, and Steve Carter's *Pecong* (1990). In her thesis, Christina Kramer shows the way the mother in each version is portrayed as a deviant figure, especially in Carr's main character, Hester Swane, as a socially ostracized mother. Returning to Euripides' *Medea*, it is a Greek tragedy about Medea, a former Colchis princess whose husband, Jason, abandons her to marry Glauce, the daughter of King Creon of Corinth. Betrayed and enraged, Medea devises a plan for vengeance. Marina Carr's play tells the story of Hester Swane, an Irish Traveller who faces a fate like that of Medea. She is abandoned by her partner, Carthage, who leaves her to marry Catherine. Hester, like Medea, feels deceived and cast aside. However, Hester is not seeking revenge; she only wants to keep her home and live with her daughter, Josie. Unfortunately, Carthage is obsessed with making Hester's life miserable, and he takes the things that matter most to Hester: Josie and her home, which happens to be a caravan. Caravans have served as a primary way of housing for many Irish Travellers. These caravans symbolise mobility, freedom, and cultural identity. Additionally, these homes reflect the values and traditions of the Irish Travellers. Thus, Hester and Josie's caravan is a symbol of their heritage and independence. Notably, the caravan is situated near the bog, a place that holds cultural and symbolic meaning in Irish tradition. The bog is intertwined with Hester's identity and emotional world. Moreover, it represents a source of sorrow in her life. A place where Hester's mother had abandoned her after promising to come back for her. Consequently, the removal of her caravan as well as the separation from this land signifies a profound rupture. However, Hester prefers losing everything, including Josie, instead of being stripped of everything from Carthage. To prevent this from happening, Hester burns down her house, kills her daughter, and takes her own life. In sum, Marina Carr's play not only draws from classical sources, such as Euripides' *Medea*, to write *By the Bog of Cats...*, but she also vividly and descriptively presents Irish culture. Marina Carr's work vividly portrays its myths, landscapes, society, language, and culture. She pays special attention to the way Irish Travellers communicate verbally, highlighting their dialectal features of Hiberno-English, a variant of English spoken in Ireland that originates from the Irish Midlands. The use of this dialect provides authenticity to Carr's characters. In addition, dialect becomes a tool of emotional expression and a way of building character identity. It can also function as a class distinction (Terrazas & Martínez, 2022a). These elements, an integral part of Marina Carr's heritage, collide, intertwine, and ultimately enrich the story. However, the process of translating faces numerous challenges in delivering an accurate and faithful translation, especially when it comes to translating dialects. As Terrazas and Martínez (2022b) note, "the Irish Travellers' dialect was untranslatable" (p. 258). This occurs due to the lack of a one-to-one equivalent. The resulting translation may contain errors that can impact the narrative in various ways. These errors often arise from a lack of understanding of cultural references, unfamiliarity with specific terminology, or the omission of complex cultural concepts in the source texts (Ní Ríordáin & Schwerter, 2019, p. xvii). Furthermore, as Kruger (2007) suggests, a translated text must convey the essence of the source text both linguistically and culturally to avoid misinterpretations that could disrupt the translation if overlooked or misunderstood. Given these considerations, our interest stems from the lack of research on cultural errors in translation, particularly in theatre translation.

This study analyses examines potential cultural errors in two Spanish translations of Marina Carr's play *By the Bog of Cats...* (1999) rendered by Melania Terrazas Gallego and Álvaro Martínez de la Puente Molina's *Junto a la Ciénaga de los Gatos...* (2022a), which is the only complete translation, and Patricia Novillo-Corvalán *El Pantano de los Gatos* (2009). These translations will be the primary sources for this final-year dissertation.

Furthermore, we will compare Terrazas and Mat ínez's translation with a partial translation by Patricia Novillo-Corval án (2009), which is translated into a variety of Spanish known as Rioplatense. This variety is spoken in the southern part of the American continent, specifically in Argentina and Uruguay. These translations from two different cultures will enable us to explore how translators from diverse contexts interpret the exact source text in distinctive ways. Moreover, these two translations offer an insightful understanding of how culture influences not only languages but also the entire interpretation of the source text.

This study is divided into five sections. First, I will identify and compare cultural errors in the two Spanish translations of Carr's *By the Bog of Cats*... Secondly, we will examine various theories and conduct a literature review of concepts such as translation and cultural errors to explore how these errors are comprehended and represented in Spanish-translated texts. We will also explore the similarities and differences between the two texts and observe the impact these cultural missteps have on the play's overall meaning, tone, and reception in the target language. Our third section sets forth a literature review on cultural errors, which will serve as a foundation for our research questions. The methodology for conducting our comparative analysis is displayed in the fourth section. The fifth section presents the results, followed by a discussion. Finally, we will showcase our conclusions, implications, and constraints.

### Theoretical Framework

This section focuses on the conceptualisations of translation and cultural errors, which will be used to shed light on the representation of cultural errors in the selected translated texts, along with their similarities and differences, and the impact these cultural errors have on the play's overall meaning, tone, and reception in the target language.

#### Definition of Translation

Defining translation can be challenging because it extends beyond simply replacing words from one language with those in another. It needs to consider cultural subtleties, context, and linguistic structures to convey meaning across languages. The complexity of this process stems from grammatical disparities, social conventions, and idiomatic expressions. Additionally, there exists a comprehensive number of definitions, which may vary according to different scholars' approaches. To offer a more precise understanding, we have chosen to categorise these definitions into two main types: translation as a process and translation as equivalence. These are fundamental elements in literary translation because the former deals with the way the rendering activity is performed. It focuses on mental operations and the steps. The latter focuses on achieving some correspondence between the source and the target languages, which we aimed to explore in our study.

**Translation as a process.** Research has defined translation as a process. John Cunnison Catford argues that translation is as "an operation performed on languages: a process of substituting a text in one language for another" (1965, p. 20). For Catford, translation is like a mathematical process in which one linguistic unit is replaced with another, suggesting a focus on the mechanical aspect of linguistic transformation. Similarly, Peter Newmark views translation as a "craft that is used to replace a written message and/or statement, in a same message and/or statement in another language" (2001, p. 7). Although Newmark shares a similar viewpoint on translation, he adds the term "craft" which shifts it from a purely scientific or mechanical process to a more creative one. He concludes that the translator brings some artistry to the act of translating. Mildred Larson, on his part, defines translation as:

Transferring the meaning of the source language into the receptor language. This is done by going from the form of the first language to the form of the second language by way of semantic structure. It is meaning which is being transferred and must be held constant. (1984, p. 4)

Larson claims that translation is a transferring process. This view contrasts with Catford and Newmark's views, for whom translation is a substituting or replacing process. Additionally, Larson highlights the importance of meaning in the translation process, which suggests that the primary goal of translation is to preserve the intrinsic meaning in the target language.

Jiří Levý presents and emphasises a similar perspective by defining translation as “a Process of Communication: the goal of translating is to convey the knowledge of the original to the foreign reader” (1967, p. 148). Levý underscores the communicative aspect of translation by highlighting that it aims to mediate and facilitate understanding among diverse linguistic and cultural groups. To our knowledge, research on cultural errors in literary translation has been scarce because many studies have prioritised linguistic and structural fidelity over cultural dimensions. This study is a preliminary attempt to explore this area. The notions of these previous scholars who view translation as a process align with the purpose of our study, as our objectives aim to identify cultural errors in two Spanish translations of a literary Irish play. Thus, it reveals how culture influences the interpretation of the source text in terms of both linguistic and cultural aspects.

**Translation as equivalence.** While previous scholars see translation as a process, some theorists encapsulate translation as the pursuit of equivalence between the source and the target languages. For example, Roger Thomas Bell defines translation as “an expression in another language (or target language) of what has been expressed in another, source language, preserving semantic and stylistic equivalences” (1991, p. 6). Bell's perspective stresses the necessity of keeping meaning and preserving the stylistic equivalence in translation.

In the same vein, Eugene Nida defines translation as “the search for natural equivalent words in the target language that are infinitely close to the source language information in meaning and style” (2004, p. 12). Nida's perspective primarily focuses on identifying natural equivalents that are both semantically and stylistically like the source language. This view aligns with his concepts of dynamic equivalence in translation. Nida's dynamic equivalence suggests that “the relationship between receptor and message should be substantially the same as that which existed between the original receptors and the message” (Nida, 1964, p. 159). He highlights that a translation should have the same effect on the target audience as the original text had on the initial audience. Nida also emphasises the importance of the naturalness of the target language, reflecting his belief that translation should prioritise the fluency and readability of the target text.

However, to retain expressive identity, translation requires altering or discarding original linguistic elements, which is more than simply replacing words and grammar between languages. Therefore, departing from direct equivalence can present challenges in determining the appropriate level of equivalence (Bassnett, 2002). That is, translation is not merely replacing linguistic elements between languages, mainly when dealing with idiomatic expressions and metaphors, but conveying meaning. As Bassnett (2002) suggests, translating both idioms and metaphors could require rejecting primary elements of the source language text to achieve a closer meaning from the source language text.

Moreover, Bassnett acknowledges that when the translator moves away from close linguistic equivalence, obstacles emerge in determining the precise nature of the equivalence being sought. Bassnett's observations underscore a critical issue in translation: the cultural and contextual elements that influence the translation process. By viewing translation as a linguistic and semantic process aimed at achieving equivalence, cultural aspects often

complicate the translator's task, leading to the emergence of cultural errors or misinterpretations in the translated target text. Theories of translation, both as a process and as equivalence, are relevant to this study because they highlight key concepts that help understand the challenges translators face when striving to achieve semantic and stylistic equivalence, also, the difficulties in preserving meaning when dealing with cultural elements. The following subsection will describe the concept of cultural errors, and their corresponding subtypes based on the recent work by N íR órd áin and Schwerter (2019), whose study provides a structured framework to categorise and analyse such errors.

### **Definition of Cultural Errors**

According to Bennett (2002), cultural errors in translation often stem from a lack of awareness or sensitivity to elements such as idioms, humour, social norms, and culturally specific references. These errors can lead to misinterpretation, loss of meaning, or even offence in the target culture. For instance, culturally specific metaphors or expressions often lack direct equivalents in other languages and translating them literally can result in confusion or distortion of meaning. Moreover, Mary Louis Pratt, as cited in N íR órd áin and Schwerter (2019), claims that cultural errors involve: "...an incomprehension of underlying cultural references in the source texts and the source culture, and it veers away from purely linguistic considerations to examine translation problems via the wide-angled of intercultural contact zones" (2019, p. xvii).

Building on these thoughts, it is crucial to focus on the lack of understanding of cultural references in the source text due to insufficient knowledge of the source culture. Additionally, one must comprehend a cultural reference to avoid making errors. N íR órd áin and Schwerter (2019) take a step further to explain that cultural errors "may take various shapes and forms and may generate completely different readings of the source text in translation" (p. xvii). They argue that these errors arise when translators encounter issues related to cultural differences between the source and target languages, which significantly alter the meaning of the translated text. Additionally, N íR órd áin and Schwerter classify these errors into four primary types: misreading cultural meanings, omitting or simplifying cultural elements, and altering cultural elements to manipulate their meanings. This explanation and categorization of cultural errors by N íR órd áin and Schwerter are highly relevant to my study, as they provide a blueprint for understanding the causes and consequences of cultural errors in translation. Moreover, these two scholars provide a framework that helps to identify and analyse the way cultural missteps appear when translators mediate between cultures.

**Misreading or misunderstanding cultural meanings.** As N íR órd áin and Schwerter assert, the first type of cultural error occurs when the translator ignores or misunderstands one or more connotations that underpin a term unique to the source culture (2019, p. xvii). They emphasise that the uniqueness of a cultural term plays an essential role because it either acknowledges or fails to acknowledge the multiple meanings that a term or expression may convey in the source text. These errors can stem from translators' lack of familiarity with the cultural context of the source language. According to these scholars, a limited understanding of the cultural context of the original text often leads to misunderstandings or misinterpretations. Insufficient cultural knowledge can result in translations that fail to fully capture the subtle meanings inherent in the source text.

**Omission or simplification of cultural elements.** The second type of cultural error occurs when translators, either intentionally or unintentionally overlook cultural elements to simplify or clarify a complex cultural concept. As N íR órd áin and Schwerter (2019) note, overlooking these cultural elements is common when the source text contains aspects that may be difficult for the target audience to grasp, such as idiomatic expressions, cultural

references, or social norms. Essential components of the original cultural meaning may be lost by omitting or oversimplifying these elements. Consequently, a distorted message is produced in the target text. Thus, while simplification may make the translation more accessible, it may jeopardise the integrity and complexity of the source text's cultural meaning (N íR órd án & Schwerter, 2019).

**Manipulation or omission for ideological purposes.** According to N íR órd án and Schwerter, the third type of cultural error occurs when a translator deliberately omits or alters specific cultural connotations to manipulate or convey a different meaning than that of the source text (2019, p. xviii). The motives for such manipulation or omission can stem from political, ideological, or commercial interests. In these instances, the translators' choices are guided not by linguistic or cultural factors but by an intentional transformation of the message to suit interests. While a cultural error can distort the original text, it can also be viewed as a form of creative interpretation or cultural adaptation.

Previous statements about the categorisation of cultural errors also suggest that these errors are seen as a source of inspiration. In this respect, N íR órd án and Schwerter take a more positive view of cultural errors. In some cases, what, at first sight, might be perceived as a cultural error could offer a new perspective or source of inspiration for the translator. These errors could lead to innovative solutions or adaptations that enhance the target text, even if they move away from the original meaning. In this sense, cultural errors are not always harmful but can be a beginning of creative reinterpretation that brings different and new insights into the translation process. Considering those dissimilar approaches and their distinctive shapes, analyses of source and target texts might focus on identifying errors in translation with an open view of what a cultural error can contribute to the overall translation process.

The relevance of these previous studies on translation and cultural errors to this study lies in their exploration of how translating a deeply culturally rooted text, such as Carr's *By the Bog of Cats...*, can present challenges in its translation. Those challenges can lead to misinterpretations and result in inaccurate translation. Based on these studies, this research can critically examine how the source text has been rendered to identify cultural missteps in the target texts. A literature review concerning cultural errors will also follow this section, as it is the primary purpose of our study.

## **Literature Review**

This section will review the fields and studies that have influenced our research on cultural errors.

### **Research on Cultural Errors**

The literature indicates that, as noted above, there has been limited research on cultural errors. An overview of the areas that have contributed to the knowledge of our specific research on cultural errors is detailed below in Table 1 and described thereafter.

This table illustrates that the study of cultural errors focuses primarily on cultural differences. For example, in his work, Nida (1964) discusses how these cultural differences impact translation, suggesting the necessity of understanding both source and target cultures. Furthermore, he stresses that translation is not merely a mechanical transfer of words from one language to another; instead, it is a complex process that conveys meaning across cultures. As previously noted, Nida's perspective on translation is based on the principles of equivalence. To this end, he introduces two key concepts in translation theory: formal equivalence and dynamic equivalence. The former represents a literal translation approach that closely adheres to the structure and wording of the original

language. However, it can lead to cultural misunderstandings when direct equivalents do not exist. The latter is an approach centred on conveying the original message's meaning and emotional effect, even if it requires altering the wording or structure to fit the target culture. Nida also emphasises that the translator's role is of paramount importance in mediating cultural differences; to achieve an equivalent impact on the audience, the translator must possess a profound understanding of both the source and target cultures.

Table 1

*Research Fields and Studies on Cultural Errors in Translation*

Author	Focus
Nida, Eugene (1964)	Cultural differences Source and target cultures in translation
Baker, Mona (1992)	Cultural issues and differences
Bassnett, Susan (2002)	Cultural differences in translation process
N íR órda í, Cliona & Shwereter, Stephanie (2019)	Cultural errors in translation
Terrazas, Melania & Mart íez, Álvaro (2022b)	Translation process

Furthermore, Nida asserts that cultural inaccuracies can occur when translators overlook cultural differences. He advocates for a dynamic approach to translation that prioritises the communicative and cultural essence of the original message rather than strictly adhering to formal equivalence. This method seeks to minimise cultural errors, ensuring that the translation resonates with the target audience while preserving the integrity of the source message.

In a similar vein, Mona Baker (1992) provides a comprehensive analysis of the challenges involved in translation, emphasising the role of cultural factors and how cultural differences can lead to translation errors. Baker identifies several key elements of cultural errors, including *culture-bound terms* (words or expressions that may lack equivalents in the target language, often resulting in errors or a loss of meaning), *loss of cultural nuance* (translating across cultures can lead to misinterpretation if the translator overlooks the importance of cultural context), *translation strategies for cultural equivalence* (strategies for translating culture-specific terms, such as footnotes or adaptations, must be employed carefully to avoid misinterpretation or cultural distortion), *cultural mediation* (the translator's role as a cultural mediator ensures both linguistic accuracy and the faithful transfer of cultural meanings), and *cultural errors in specific contexts* (these translation errors can occur in fields like literature, where references may be lost, or law, where cultural misunderstandings affect accuracy). Since our investigation aims to analyse cultural translation errors, we focus on the three types of cultural issues identified by Baker (1992). First, *overgeneralisation*, where a cultural term is overly simplified or broadly adapted; second, *omission*, where cultural references are excluded due to perceived untranslatability or irrelevance; and third, *inappropriate substitution*, where a culturally distinct term is used that fails to convey the intended meaning of the source term accurately. Baker highlights how cultural context influences translation, stressing that translators need to understand cultural differences. Besides, she emphasises the significance of recognising the cultural implications of terms and using strategies to accurately convey them, urging translators to consider both linguistic equivalence and the broader cultural impact of their choices.

In her work *Reflections on Translations*, Bassnett (2002, p. 44) argues that translation involves much more than simply transferring words across languages. Thus, cultural contexts must be carefully considered, as translations can become inaccurate, misleading, and offensive. When analysing translations within cultural contexts, cultural errors often arise from omitting or misinterpreting idiomatic language, societal norms, humour,

and culturally specific references, including historical events and traditional practices. Bassnett also states that in theatrical translations, translators must navigate the differences in performance traditions and the audience's cultural expectations. Her work advocates for a translation approach that is critically informed, contextually aware, and culturally sensitive to avoid the common pitfalls of cultural errors. In like manner, Bassnett also attempts to reconsider the role of translation in shaping our understanding of the world and the relationships between different cultures.

The most recent work, *Speaking Like a Cow: Cultural Errors in Translation* by N í R órd á n and Schwerter (2019), presents a series of essays that address various aspects of cultural errors in translation. In alignment with Bassnett (2002), these scholars observe that cultural misunderstandings occur when the context is neglected or misunderstood. Such cultural errors in translation can arise from several factors, including cultural gaps (differences between source and target cultures that hinder accurate meaning conveyance), insufficient cultural competence by the translator (who must have a strong understanding of both source and target cultures to avoid misinterpretations), and reception ambiguities (which occur when the target audience misinterprets the translated text due to cultural differences in perception). In their work, N í R órd á n and Schwerter's (2019) compilation of essays provides various elements for conducting a myriad of analyses on cultural errors. Some of these elements relate to idiomatic expressions, humour, cultural context, literary translation, technical translation, media and film translation, and national identity. The authors conclude that these factors are frequently deeply embedded in cultural backgrounds; consequently, ignoring them can lead to erroneous interpretations. In keeping with N í R órd á n and Schwerter, in our analysis, we agree with the idea that, although cultural errors are often inevitable, they can be minimised by conducting thorough research, having a profound understanding of both cultures, and employing effective translation strategies.

Although this latest study, conducted by Melania Terrazas Gallego and Álvaro Martínez de la Puente (2022), focuses on the translation process rather than cultural errors, it is relevant to mention it due to its importance in this study. These scholars mentioned the difficulties and challenges faced when translating Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats...* Their translation involved adapting Hiberno-English dialects used by Irish Travellers into a Spanish dialect used by Mercheros, an ethnic minority with a nomadic lifestyle. Both Irish Travellers and Mercheros share similar socio-cultural traits. Having chosen to adapt from one dialect to another, it carries a risk of making cultural missteps during the translation process. Thus, the translators aimed to mediate between cultures by employing several strategies to strike a balance between fidelity to the original. As Terrazas and Martínez state, "To carry out the translation of a dialect, we followed a process of homogenisation" (2022b, p. 258). Homogenisation or domestication is a process, as stated by Venuti, that aims at "minimising the foreignness of the target text" (as cited in Terrazas & Martínez, 2022b, p. 258). These two scholars also note in a precise manner that, "from an ethnic and post-colonial point of view, domestication contributes to maintaining the differences between colonies and ex-colonies as well as cultural minorities and majorities over time" (2022b, p. 258). This perspective suggests that domestication serves as a tool of class distinction, helping to conform to the target culture's norms. Additionally, "...a domesticating translation shapes the reader's 'horizon of expectations'" (as cited in Terrazas & Martínez, 2022b, p. 259). This concept coined by Hans Robert Jauss in his book *Toward an Aesthetic Reception* (1982) in which he states that, "readers and authors in a given period read and write within a set of assumptions and conventions that govern their practice" (as cited in Terrazas & Martínez, 2022b, p. 259). This idea highlights that, by choosing domestication as the primary translation process, the source text becomes more accessible to the target culture. Moreover, it influences how the target audience interprets and receives it.

However, this type of translation process can lead to the neutralisation of cultural markers and compromise the authenticity of the source text if translators undermine the play's original cultural and social context.

The literature review enables us to establish our research questions for analysing cultural errors. Due to the lack of prior studies in this area, our primary interest lies in this area. To our knowledge, this study will be the first to conduct a comparative analysis between two Spanish translations of an Irish play. What is lacking in the previous literature review is an empirical approach to understanding cultural errors from a dual perspective on translator agency. Thus, both perspectives will enrich my study on cultural errors. To this end, for our study, we considered the following research questions:

RQ1: Is there evidence of cultural errors in the Spanish translations by Terrazas and Martínez (2022a) and Novillo-Corvalán (2009) of the play *By the Bog of Cats...* by Marina Carr (1999)? If so, are there aspects related to how Irish cultural references, idiomatic expressions, and social context are rendered in both Peninsular and Rioplatense Spanish translations?

RQ2: Are there differences and similarities in the type of cultural errors found in the Spanish translations by Terrazas and Martínez (2022a) and Novillo-Corvalán (2009) regarding linguistic and cultural knowledge, translation techniques, and translator purpose could contribute to these issues?

RQ3: How do cultural errors in the Spanish translations by Terrazas and Martínez (2022a) and Novillo-Corvalán (2009) impact the overall meaning, tone, and reception of the original play by Marina Carr (1999)?

## Methodology

### Sample

Table 2 presents the texts used for our study, including aspects such as author, text title, type of text, and language context.

Table 2

#### *Analysis of the Selected Spanish Translations Texts for By the Bog of Cats...*

Author	Text title	Type of text	Language context
Terrazas Gallego, Melania & Martínez de la Puente Molina, Álvaro (2022a)	<i>Junto a la Ciénaga de los Gatos</i>	Spanish translated book	Spain
Novillo-Corvalán, Patricia (2009)	<i>El Pantano de los Gatos</i>	Spanish translated article	Uruguay

The methodology employed in this research is comparative textual analysis. In the realm of theatre, this form of exploration enables us to investigate the characteristics of various works, systems, or phenomena. Bassnett (1993) notes that comparative literature and translation studies are intertwined since translation plays a crucial role in understanding and interpreting texts across different cultures. Similarly, Apter (2006, p. 4) highlights that “Comparative literature involves not only a juxtaposition of literary texts but also a recognition of how cultural and linguistic boundaries are blurred in the process of translation”. This comparative approach in theatre translation provides a closer examination of cultural references, idiomatic expressions, and social contexts. Thus, our primary purpose—identifying cultural errors and the reasons behind their occurrence in each Spanish-translated version of our study—will serve its purpose.

### Data Analysis and Procedures

This research analyses the data collected by focusing on the linguistic and cultural aspects of the translations and the decisions made during the rendering process.

Our approach to this analysis is primarily cultural, underscoring the cultural context's significant role in the translation process. We consider the concepts and theories from scholars cited in our theoretical framework and state-of-the-art sections to do so. In addition, an evaluation is conducted to demonstrate their impact on the fidelity of the source text. Furthermore, the study examines whether the translators' cultural and linguistic knowledge of Irish and Spanish contexts has influenced their decisions.

From a cultural approach, the following four key elements are considered to analyse cultural errors in the two selected Spanish translations. First, a thorough examination identifies essential cultural elements, expressions, and idioms that may pose difficulties in translation. It focuses on Irish culturally specific terms or concepts that might not have direct equivalents in Spanish. Secondly, a comparison of translations in the *target texts* is conducted simultaneously to identify how the translators rendered the cultural elements in the *source text*. This analysis compares two specific aspects. The first aspect comprises translating cultural words such as idioms, expressions, and historical or mythological figures. The second aspect involves the adaptation or omission of cultural subtleties and how these choices may impact on the audience's understanding of the play. Subsequently, a categorisation of cultural errors is divided into two types. The first is called *misinterpretation*: "The translator ignores or misunderstands one or several connotations that underpin a term unique to the source culture" (Ní Ríordáin & Schwerter, 2019, p. xvii). Consequently, a term is distorted or inaccurately translated into the target language. The second is known as *omission*: "A cultural reference is omitted from the translation, which leads to the elimination of a key aspect of the cultural notion that impedes comprehension of the source text's message" (Ní Ríordáin & Schwerter, 2019, p. xviii).

Finally, cultural appropriateness is assessed by examining how translations address specific Irish cultural references that have a significant impact on a Spanish-speaking audience. This cultural appropriateness is linked to Friedrich Schleiermacher's (1813) lecture, "On the Different Methods of Translating", who presents two main strategies for translators: "Either the translator leaves the author in peace, as much as possible, and moves the reader towards him; or he leaves the reader in peace, as much as possible, and moves the author towards him" (p. 46). On one hand, the idea of bringing the reader close to the author allows the reader to experience the source culture. On the other hand, moving the author toward the reader makes the source text more accessible by adapting it to the target culture. These strategies contribute to evaluating whether translations preserve the essence of Irish cultural references or adjust them to enhance their reception among Spanish-speaking audiences.

Moreover, in addition to the previous steps, our study included three crucial aspects: cultural references, idioms, and cultural signifiers. The first emphasises rendering idiomatic expressions and cultural references within the Irish context. Special attention is also given to these cultural references to identify whether they are retained, adapted, or omitted in the target texts. The second aspect explores how cultural signifiers such as idioms, expressions, symbols, objects, and social norms are translated. This includes translating specific terms with cultural value (e.g., names of mythical figures like *Jack Frost* or *El Coco*) and their impact on the audience's understanding of the characters and their actions.

## Results and Discussion

The first research question aimed to determine whether there are cultural errors in the Spanish translations by Terrazas and Martínez, and Novillo-Corvalán. Our results identified four errors in both texts: one in Novillo-Corvalán's text and the other three in Terrazas and Martínez's text. The first inaccuracy happens in Act One when Hester is talking to Monica; Hester says, "Thinks yees all she's too many notions, built her life up from a caravan

on the side of the bog” (Carr, 1999, p. 269). Meanwhile, the target text goes as follows: “Todos piensan que ella tiene una cierta noción de las cosas, la que hizo su vida en una casilla al lado del pantano” (Novillo-Corvalán, 2009, p. 151). The first misstep occurred in Novillo-Corvalán’s translation when she rendered the word *caravan* as *casilla*. There is no suitable replacement for *caravan*, and this agrees with Baker (1992), whose studies state that the inappropriate substitution of a cultural term leads to a failure to convey a similar meaning from the source text.

Moving on to the second error, which occurs in Act Two as Hester is talking to Mrs. Kilbride, Hester says: “The kettle callin’ the pot white” (Carr, 1999, p. 312). This second inaccuracy happens in Terrazas and Martínez’s translation when they render this section as: “Le dijo la sartén al cazo” (2022a, p. 81). Although the translators offered an equivalent expression in the target text, the idiom is used without adding any changes. The idiomatic expression written in Carr’s play undergoes a subtle change, specifically in the word *white*. The correct expression is as follows: *The kettle is calling the pot black*. This is in line with Baker (1992), who notes that cultural errors occur when there is an overgeneralization of the translated term from the original text, which ends up being adapted broadly. Consequently, the meaning embedded in the source text’s expression is lost when the idiom is rendered without the changes made by Carr. Having done that, the utterance’s semantic load has kept it, but the underlying meaning of the expression has disappeared.

The third cultural error also occurs in Act Two when Mrs. Kilbride talks to Hester. She says, “Have you ever been discarded, Elsie Kilbride?—the way I have been discarded. ¿Do you know what that feels like? To be flung on the ashpit and you still alive!” (Carr, 1999, p. 313). The text in Spanish goes like this: “¿Alguna vez has s ó quit áde en medio, Elisa Matamala, del modo en que a m íse me ha quitao? ¿Sabes qu ése siente? ¿Arroj áa la calle mientras a ún sigues viva!” (Terrazas & Martínez, 2022a, p. 82). The error occurs in the last part when Hester is asking Mrs Kilbride what it feels like to be thrown to the *ashpit* that has been translated as *calle*. By translating it in this manner, the meaning of *ashpit* and the whole context lose its core value. Let us look up the word *ashpit* in the dictionary: a receptacle in the bottom of a fireplace, under a barbecue, or the like, for the accumulation of ashes<sup>1</sup>. The source text conveys the sensation of being thrown into the fire while still alive. The dangerous and defenseless sensation implied in the source text has its core in the word *ashpit*. Meanwhile, the Spanish version does not produce those sensations, and what is more, it creates some confusion. This blunder is consistent with Bassnett (2002), whose research states that cultural errors can be caused by neglecting or misinterpreting idiomatic language, societal norms, humour, and culturally specific references, including historical events and traditional practices and, at the same time, there is an unsuitable replacement of the cultural term which is in line with Baker’s (1992) notion of inappropriate substitution.

The fourth inaccuracy occurs in Act Three as Hester is conversing with Monica, and she compares herself with a lump. “No, I’m just wan big lump of meanness and bad thoughts” (Carr, 1999, p. 322). The Spanish version narrates it as follows: “No, yo solo soy un gran peniche y malos pensamientos” (Terrazas & Martínez, 2022a, p. 92). In this part, there is a footnote that explains the word *peniche*. According to the explanation, *peniche* comes from a type of gypsy dialect, and it means sacred spirit. The target text fails to describe the meaning of the source text by misunderstanding the meaning of the word *lump*, which describes a hard swelling found in or on the body, especially because of illness or injury<sup>2</sup>, and translated as *peniche*. Moreover, we noticed that the Spanish sentence

<sup>1</sup> Source: <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/ashpit>.

<sup>2</sup> Source: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english-spanish/lump>.

was awkwardly formed, and the word *meanness* was omitted without any explanation or justification. This aligns well with Bassnett (2002), who emphasises that cultural misunderstandings occur when the context is neglected or misunderstood.

Progressing to the second research question, its purpose is to identify whether there are differences and similarities in the types of cultural errors found in the translations by Terrazas and Martínez and Novillo-Corvalán. Our findings revealed that the errors identified in both translations share one similarity in terms of linguistic and cultural knowledge. This similarity is related to Baker's inappropriate substitution of a cultural term in Novillo-Corvalán's translation. In the same way, Terrazas and Martínez's third cultural error occurs due to this inadequate replacement of a cultural term.

Regarding the differences, we identified that Terrazas and Martínez's second and fourth errors differ from Novillo-Corvalán's error. The second error in Terrazas and Martínez's text corresponds to an overgeneralisation that is in line with Baker (1992), which has been explained previously. The fourth misstep, from the same authors, refers to overlooking or ignoring a cultural term. This inadequacy is linked to Ní Rórdáin and Schwerter's (2019) studies on cultural errors.

Moving forward to our last research question, which aims to identify how cultural errors in the Spanish translations by Terrazas and Martínez, as well as Novillo-Corvalán, impact the overall meaning, tone, and reception of the original play by Marina Carr. Our results revealed that the missteps identified in our research impacted the source text's meaning, tone, and reception.

Regarding the first error, Novillo-Corvalán has failed to convey the meaning of the word *caravan*. By doing so, the rendered text loses its intrinsic meaning. This supports Baker's (1992) key elements for identifying cultural errors, precisely her notion of the *loss of cultural nuance*, in which she notes that translating across cultures can lead to misinterpretation if the translator overlooks the importance of cultural context. Additionally, the tone is influenced by the shifting meaning of "caravan", which implies movement, a temporary lifestyle, as well as the loss of the character's background and social context. Regarding the reception, Spanish audiences might not convey the same sense of ostracism, marginalisation, or social context that the source text conveys. This is in good agreement with Nida's perspective on translation. He emphasises that cultural inaccuracies can happen when translators overlook cultural differences.

Concerning the second misstep, Terrazas and Martínez overlooked a crucial part of the idiomatic expression by omitting the nuanced change from the source text. To do so, the impact extends beyond a pure understanding of the overall meaning. As far as the impact is concerned, it can be concluded that Marina Carr made this change for a particular reason, and I believe it was for comedic purposes. In this regard, it aimed to shock and confront the audience with an unexpected utterance that elicits a burst of laughter. Consequently, leaving the expression unchanged, the impact on the target text is tremendous. The tone shifted towards a more neutral or steady one, but, from my perspective, the more significant effect was on the reception. This is consistent with Nida (1964), for whom the translator's role is essential to ensure that the translation resonates with the audience while preserving the message from the source text.

Regarding the third cultural inadequacy, Terrazas and Martínez's translation impacts the overall meaning, tone, and reception of the source text. From my perspective, the meaning conveyed in their translation seems to be lacking something and does not evoke the harsh image that the source text does. Additionally, the tone is affected, which comes across as milder. On the contrary, the original text communicates a sense of danger, helplessness, and rejection. In addition to the meaning and tone, the reception is also influenced. Since the sense

of distress and violence has been softened, Spanish-speaking readers may be less empathetic toward the character's current situation.

Moving forward, we come to our last cultural inadequacy. This cultural error affects the overall meaning conveyed in the source text. The translators decided to render the word *lump* with a culturally loaded term *peniche*. By doing so, they have also impacted on the tone and reception. The original tone of self-deprecation shifts into a more ambiguous and somewhat mystical one. The awkward sentence structure also weakens the tone by diminishing its impact. In relation to the reception, the cultural term *peniche* would not have the same effect as *lump* on Spanish-speaking readers and could not evoke the same feelings of self-hate implied in the source text. Additionally, the emotional character's state of mind could be distorted, and readers may not connect with the character on the same level. Additionally, the awkwardness of the sentence can divert readers' attention, causing them to focus on the translation rather than the character's internal struggle.

### Conclusion

This study has examined two Spanish translations of Marina Carr's *By the Bog of Cats...* (1999), with an aim to identify and analyse any possible cultural errors in these rendered texts. The analysis shows that both Terrazas and Martínez's full version and Novillo-Corvalán's partial version provide a faithful adaptation of Marina Carr's dramatic text. Nonetheless, both translations encounter difficulties in faithfully conveying some cultural aspects of the original text. Consequently, these challenges lead to inaccuracies in the translated versions.

The findings show that cultural errors are present in both translations. Novillo-Corvalán's translation has one cultural error that has to do with an inappropriate substitution of a culturally meaningful term *caravan*. Terrazas and Martínez's version presents three cultural missteps. These are an overgeneralisation of an idiomatic expression, an inaccurate substitution of a culturally significant term, and a misinterpretation of a culturally specific term. These errors align with the concepts established by Baker (1992), Bassnett (2002), and Ní Ríordáin and Schwerter (2019). Both translations try to capture the essence of the original text. However, the identified errors highlight the struggles they faced in this play and the difficulties they encountered in transferring culturally loaded terms.

The impact of these cultural missteps goes beyond the linguistic realm. They fail to produce an equivalent response in the target audience. Consequently, the desired effect of evoking key thematic elements such as marginalisation, humour, or self-loathing, all essential elements in Carr's play, is diluted, and the function of the text is compromised. Moreover, these errors frequently result in emotional and aesthetic detachment. Consequently, the reader or viewer cannot totally comprehend the character's intentions and experiences due to the loss of cultural specificity.

Building on this idea, the misrepresentation of loaded cultural references can impact the author's intentions, transforming a complex character into a generic figure in the target culture. Additionally, dramatic texts such as Carr's play rely on cultural cues to build tension or release it by laughter. When humour is mistranslated or omitted, it affects the rhythm of the play as well as the audience's engagement. Moreover, Carr's themes of marginalisation and self-loathing stem from the Irish socio-political context. By translating these topics without a deep understanding of these issues, it results in a loss of their critical components and socio-political significance.

This research has tried to contribute to broader discussions on cultural adaptation in translation. These appreciations are relevant for translators in various fields, particularly those involved in theatre translations. There are some examples of theatre translation that deal with cultural adaptation, domestication and translation

strategies. One of them is Federico Garcia Lorca's *Bodas de Sangre* (1932). This play draws on Spanish culture, Catholic symbolism, gender roles, and the concept of honor. What is more, Lorca's play is filled with cultural elements that in many cases do not have an equivalent in many target languages. Consequently, the translation process as well as the translators' choices needs to find a balance to transmit as accurately as possible what Lorca wanted to convey in his text.

Although this study offers a detailed comparative analysis of the two Spanish translations, its scope is limited due to the lack of reception studies. Additionally, research on the impact of cultural errors on theatre translation in Spanish-speaking contexts provides a deeper understanding of the effects of these errors on the audience. The effects of these errors include loss of cultural meaning and context, alteration of the character's perception in the target language, shifting of the original tone, the emotional impact on the target audience, and the intended message is lost. Moreover, a more comprehensive analysis of other translations into different languages would be advisable. Our perspective provides a broader understanding of how cultural differences are addressed in diverse linguistic contexts.

Future comparative research on translating Irish cultural works into other languages, especially those with significantly different cultural contexts, could help demonstrate how these works are adapted for audiences in languages such as French, German, or Spanish in countries outside Spain. By doing so, it could reveal new patterns in cultural adaptation among languages. Additionally, empirical studies on audience reception can be conducted, such as surveys or interviews with Spanish-speaking theatregoers. This could provide valuable insight into how cultural errors in translation influence the interpretation and enjoyment of plays.

This study offers a detailed analysis of two Spanish translations of *By the Bog of Cats...*, with a specific focus on identifying and categorising cultural errors. By doing so, it highlights the intricate relationship between translation theory and practice. As this study focuses on two distinct Spanish translations, we must remember that its scope is limited to these two versions only. The analysis presents a narrow perspective and lags other Spanish translations from various Spanish-speaking countries. The spectrum of possibilities is vast, and further research could enrich the way we perceive, understand, and present Irish culture in other places. Furthermore, it offers important lessons for both current and future translators.

Ultimately, this dissertation aims to illuminate the role of translators as cultural mediators and the importance of cultural awareness in preserving the essence of texts when translating them into a new language.

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